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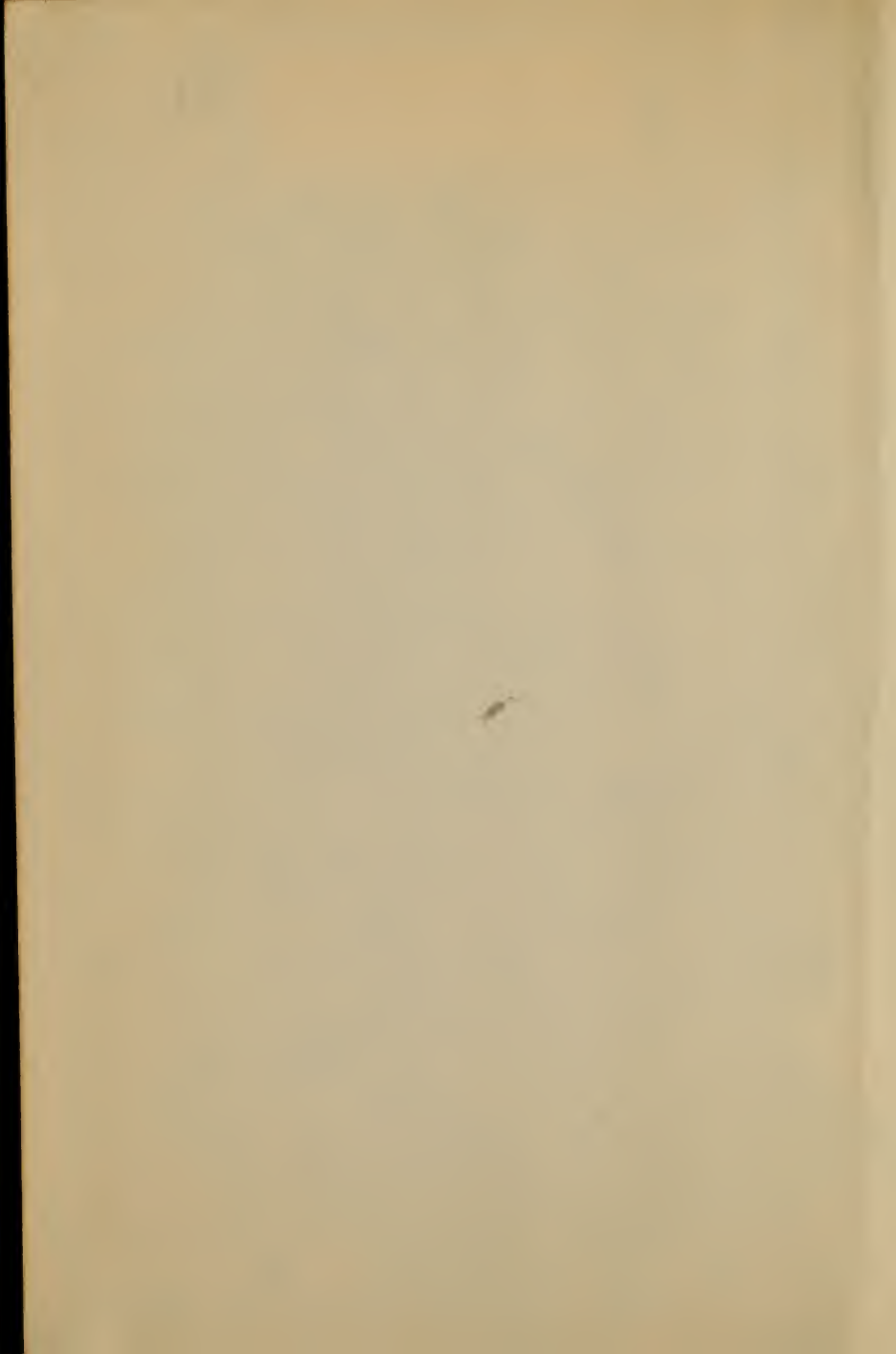
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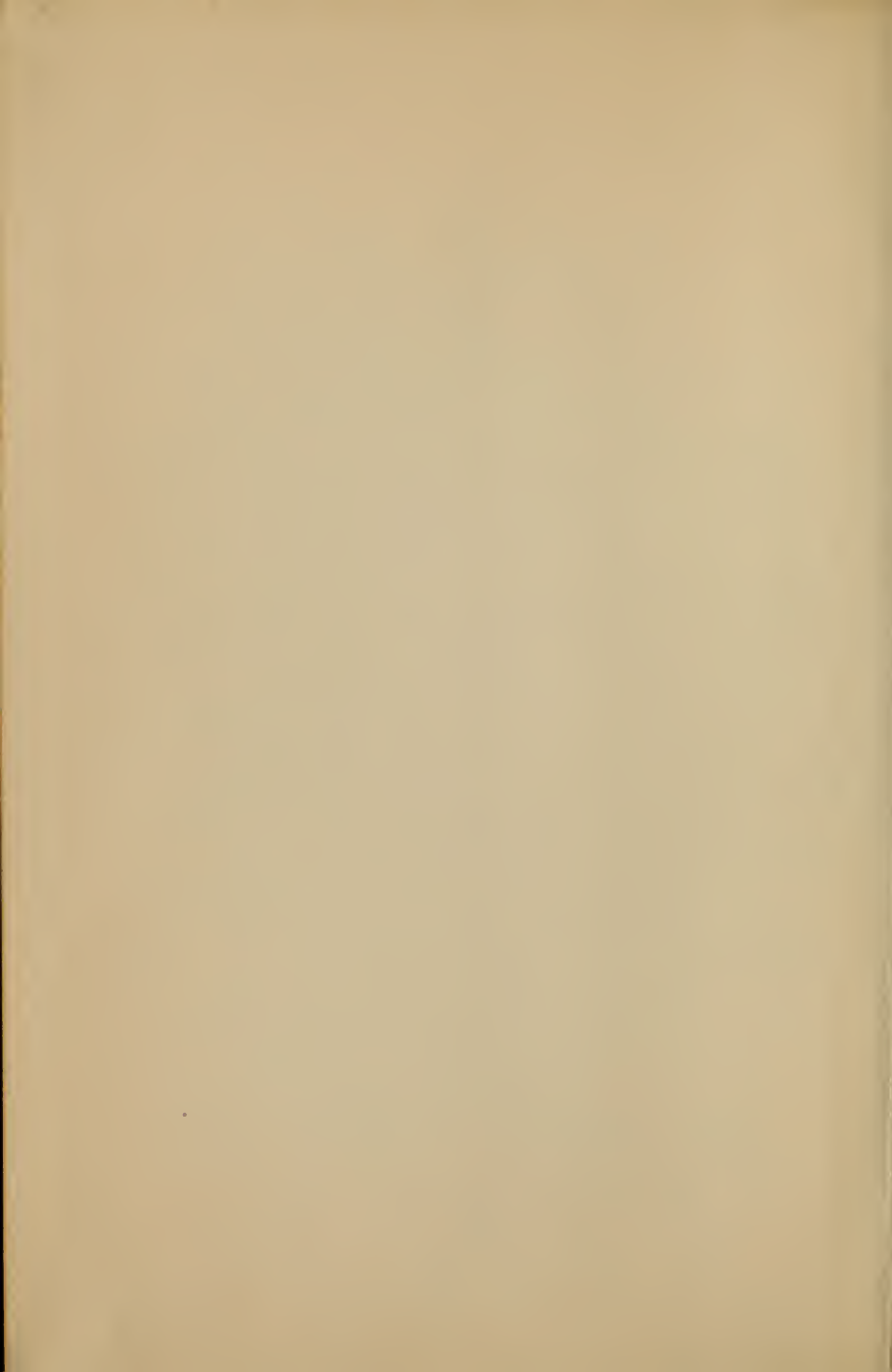
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WITHDRAWN









THE BOY WHALEMAN







*In less than a minute the bow just touched the big fellow's body. FRONTISPIECE. See page 196.*

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The Beacon Hill Bookshelf



# The Boy Whaleman

By  
George F. Tucker

With Illustrations in Color by  
George Avison



Boston

Little, Brown, and Company

1925



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Published August, 1924.

# CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I	PREPARING FOR THE VOYAGE . . . . .	1
II	AT SEA . . . . .	20
III	ABOUT WHALES . . . . .	42
IV	THE FIRST CHASE . . . . .	58
V	CAPTURING AND CUTTING-IN . . . . .	73
VI	TRYING-OUT AND ROUNDING THE HORN . . . . .	88
VII	RECRUITING AND SHORE LEAVE . . . . .	107
VIII	THE PRIZE WHALE AND THE RESCUED BOAT . . . . .	125
IX	HONOLULU AND OFF TO THE ARCTIC . . . . .	144
X	EXPERIENCES IN THE ARCTIC . . . . .	158
XI	HONOLULU AGAIN, AND SEA TALES . . . . .	176
XII	THE COAST OF JAPAN AND THE CAROLINES . . . . .	194
XIII	WHOSE WHALE WAS IT? . . . . .	208
XIV	PITCAIRN ISLAND . . . . .	228
XV	THE VISIT TO PITCAIRN . . . . .	242
XVI	HOMeward BOUND . . . . .	258
XVII	SETTLING THE VOYAGE . . . . .	273

*80*  
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## ILLUSTRATIONS

In less than a minute the bow just touched the big fellow's body . . . . .	<i>Frontispiece</i>
	<small>FACING PAGE</small>
Jake partly lost his balance, and the captain seized him .	34
Out of the thicket sprang our shipmate . . . . .	120
I shouted "B-l-o-w-s, b-l-o-w-s, b-l-o-w-s. There he breaches!" . . . . .	128
The sea became more boisterous, and the captain gave orders to throw the lead . . . . .	258



# THE BOY WHALEMAN

## CHAPTER I

### PREPARING FOR THE VOYAGE

When I was a boy, New Bedford was not, as it is now, a great manufacturing city, but the best known and largest whaling port in the world. The wharves were then busy places; there vessels were "fitted", as they used to say, and sent out on their long voyages; other vessels returned and discharged their cargoes. Great casks of oil were arranged in rows on the wharves; those that were sold were carted off on curious old trucks called gears, and those that were to await a better market were given a thick covering of seaweed. Everybody talked ships and oil. One would hear people say, "The *Janet* is reported in the Indian Ocean, clean," that is, had taken no oil; "The *Adeline* is heard from in the Pacific, having made a 'good cut'," that is, had taken a lot of oil; "There is news

from the *Marcella* from the other side of land, having done well." "The other side of land" meant the other side of the world, as Australia and New Zealand, in the waters round which many whalers used to cruise.

My father, when a young man, went whaling for a single voyage which lasted for more than three years. He was a sailor, or, to use the regular phrase, a foremast hand, and at the end of two years he became a boat-steerer or harpooner. When I was a little boy he used to take me on his knee and tell me stories about the life of the whalemen, — of chasing whales and harpooning them; of angry whales smashing boats and chewing them to bits; of towing whales to the ship and cutting them in and trying them out; of losing the ship and remaining all night in the open boats; of encountering great storms and riding them out in safety; of meeting after many months another New Bedford vessel, and getting the latest news from home, and of visiting in the Pacific Ocean islands inhabited by savages.

At an early age I made up my mind to go to sea. On Saturday afternoons I used to roam about the wharves and sometimes ven-



tured into the ships, only to be ordered out. But one day a man, called a shipkeeper, was very kind to me. The shipkeeper was the man who had charge of the wharf and the ships moored to it. He was a kind of general manager. They were taking out the cargo from a vessel.

“ Haven’t I seen you around here before ? ” he asked.

“ Oh, yes, many times. I’ve been down here on the wharves nearly every Saturday afternoon for several years.”

“ How old are you ? ”

“ Twelve.”

“ What is your name ? ”

“ Homer Bleechly.”

“ I suppose you would like to go to sea — wouldn’t you ? ”

“ Indeed, I would.”

“ As cabin boy ? ”

“ Yes.”

Then he said thoughtfully, “ Not yet, boy, not yet. It’s a hard life, so you’d better wait awhile.”

“ That was what my father said.”

The shipkeeper continued, “ You go home

and get a basket and a pail, and I'll take you up into the loft and give you something that will make you happy."

I did as he said, and on my return he took me to a building at the head of the wharf, in the front part of which was the merchant's office, and in the story above, a great loft full of whaling gear and a great many other things which the vessels had brought home from far islands in the Pacific Ocean. There was a boat like a canoe, only larger and better shaped. It was different from anything I had ever seen, and was made by savages on distant shores. Then there were paddles beautifully made, with carvings done, the shipkeeper told me, with shark's teeth and bits of sea shells. There were lots of war clubs and spears and strange-looking tools and utensils. I wanted to ship on a vessel at once and sail for the Pacific Ocean.

"Here, boy," said the shipkeeper, "give me your basket and pail."

He reached down into a great cask set on end and took out three large objects, each about the size of a football. "These are coconuts with the husks on. When you get

home take a hatchet and cut off the husks and you'll find the coconut."

Then he put a big dipper down into another cask and took up a lot of pickled limes and poured them into the pail. This he repeated several times. "There, boy," he said, "now take them things home, if you can carry them. But don't you tell any other boys that you got them things here, for, if you do, we'll be pestered by all the boys in town."

When I reached home with my prizes and showed them to my mother, the good woman looked troubled. I had often told her that I wanted to go to sea and she had done all she could to discourage me. I now renewed my desire, and, when my father came home, she took the matter up with him, and they both told me how hard the sailor's life was and how little money there was in it.

"Yes, I know, father," I said, "but haven't you taken me on your knee and told me all about your own voyage and the strange places you went to?"

"Yes, my dear son, but I didn't tell you about the unpleasant things and the hardships a sailor has to put up with."

My home was a happy one, and I was the only child. No one ever had a better mother. My father was a good man and a model parent. He earned fair wages and provided well for his little family. Why should I be discontented? Because, like many a boy, I was unreasonable. Yet, was I wholly to blame? Life in a seaport town appeals to the fancy of a boy. Longfellow wrote,

I remember the black wharves and the slips,  
And the sea-tides tossing free;  
And Spanish sailors with bearded lips  
And the beauty and mystery of the ships,  
And the magic of the sea,  
And the voice of that wayward song  
Is singing and saying still:  
"A boy's will is the wind's will,  
And the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts."

I determined to hide on some vessel, and, when she was well out to sea, show myself and apply for the position of cabin boy. As I look back upon my foolish purpose, I deeply regret my ingratitude to my parents and the pain I caused them. In one sense it was a simple thing to run away, but quite another to succeed in it. Before sailing, a whaler would drop about three miles down the harbor and remain there at anchor for several days in



charge of the shipkeeper. Then captain, officers and crew would go down in boats, weigh anchor, and off the ship would go on her long voyage.

Soon a vessel owned by the merchant who employed my friend the shipkeeper was all ready for sea. In the late afternoon I made up a bundle of clothes and went down on the wharf and walked aboard the vessel in a free and easy way. No attention was paid to me, and fortunately the shipkeeper was at the farther end of the wharf. I went down into the cabin, and I recall how clean everything was with the coating of fresh paint. I crawled into a berth, feeling sure that at six o'clock the shipkeeper would lock the door without coming into the cabin. By this time I was getting a little afraid and almost wished that I was at home. At last I heard the town clock ring out the hour of six, and then came a footstep nearer and nearer, and lo! it was the shipkeeper. He was startled when he saw me, and for a moment appeared angry. Then he said:

“I didn't expect to see you here. Didn't you know that I would have to lock up the

cabin every night until the vessel sails, and that you would surely get caught?"

"Yes, but I want to go as cabin boy, and I thought that they wouldn't ship me in the office."

"Does your mother know you are here?"

"No."

"Don't you see how foolish this all is? Now get out and I'll take you home."

I objected and he insisted. I was ashamed and did not want to go home — not that I feared punishment, but because I shrank from facing my parents. The shipkeeper took me along with him and left me with my mother. I am not going to dwell on what happened at home. I have only to say that I had a long talk with my parents that evening, and I promised that I would never attempt to run away again and that I never would ship for a voyage without their consent.

But the sea continued to call me, and Saturdays I still visited the wharves. I read every volume I could get on the life of the sailor, and was particularly delighted with such books as Dana's "Two Years before the Mast", and Melville's "Moby Dick." With

the aid of my friend, the shipkeeper, I collected all kinds of articles brought home on the ships until I had a veritable little museum.

And here, let me say that my parents took the proper course. My mother was apparently troubled, but she conferred with my father, and it was agreed that when I was old enough I might go to sea. "When I was old enough" was not very definite. I felt that I was old enough then, but I knew that my parents thought otherwise. At thirteen I entered the High School and at fifteen I felt that I had sufficient education, at least for a sailor, and I implored my parents to let me go.

"You aren't old enough," said my mother.

"But yesterday, mother, you said that I was large and strong for my age — as large and strong as a man of eighteen."

My mother made no reply, but there were tears in her eyes.

It was July and vacation. I was restless and impatient. Hitherto I had worked during vacations for a cooper, doing odd jobs, but now the cooper sent me home with the statement that I was of no use to him. Years afterward my mother told me that she and my



father conferred and decided that it was the best course to let me ship, provided my age was not against me.

In the fifties of the last century, whaling was at its height. In the warm weather ships were constantly coming and going. There was no lack of vessels, but would they ship a boy of fifteen who was as large and strong as a man of eighteen? Of course my father's consent was necessary. I went to my old friend, the shipkeeper. One of his employer's vessels named the *Seabird* was to sail in a few weeks, and I was anxious to go in her.

The shipkeeper said, "You are big for your years and as strong as a man, but a sailor's life is a hard one. But, if your folks are willing you should go, I'll see the old gentleman and find out what he says about your going in the *Seabird*. Sailors are shipped through the outfitters, sometimes called 'sharks.' The outfitters provide the men with their clothes and various articles, and the owners pay the outfitters and, at the end of the voyage, the owners take the amount out of the sailor's shares. If the old gentleman is willing to take you, don't have anything to do with an outfitter,

but have your mother provide the outfit, and I'll give her a list of the things you'll have to take with you."

In a few days the shipkeeper said that his employer would see me with my father, and in the late afternoon we appeared at his office. The merchant was a Quaker, and he appeared at first a little stern. He declared that it was unusual for one so young to be taken on a whaler as a foremast hand, but my size seemed to justify an exception; that I could ship only with my father's consent; that my parents must see to it that I had a good outfit; and that my share or lay would be  $1/180$ . On whalers captain, officers and crew shipped on shares or lays, and my share or lay was to be one barrel of oil for every one hundred and eighty barrels stowed down, and one pound of whalebone for every one hundred and eighty pounds taken.

And now my parents were busy fitting me out. The whaleman, who was to be away for several years, required clothing suited to about every climate, and an abundance of it. I was provided with needles, linen thread, spools of sewing cotton, a shaving outfit, several knives and forks with wooden handles, several combs,

two pairs of scissors, lots of buttons, plenty of soap, a couple of tin plates and a large dipper, a sheath knife and belt, three thick blankets, a bedtick and pillow filled with feathers, a dozen shirts and undershirts, three suits for light weather and a heavy suit with a large overcoat for the Arctic, two pairs of thick mittens, four pairs of brogans, one light and one heavy cap, two so'westers, two large straw hats and two oilcloth suits. My father added a roll of cotton cloth which he said might come handy for trade with the natives. Did ever a whaleman have so good an outfit?

The shipkeeper told me that he would give me some points before sailing, so, on the last Saturday afternoon, he pointed to the bow of the *Seabird* and said:

“ You see that heavy oak on the bow, and the iron shoe on the fore foot? When you see them things you may be sure a ship's bound to the Arctic, for you have to put her in good shape to battle with the ice. Now you stand off a few feet and look at the *Seabird*. She ain't as sharp and slick as a merchantman, but she ain't bad looking. Ain't she nice and clean? She's been well painted, the boats are

hanging at the davits, the rigging's been tarred and slushed, topmast spar and yard put in place and sails bent on. But, say, she'll look different from this in a few years when she comes home with the paint scratched off, the sails black and patched and the old hull greasy from stem to stern. Now you come on board."

He showed me the spare spars lashed to the deck and told me of the extra cables stowed away. Then he took me to the hatchway, and told me to look down into the hold. I could see that it was packed with a lot of things. The shipkeeper said:

"On a whaler you live together for a long time and you have to carry loads of things with you — stores, trade, slop chest, sails and duck, sundries, hardware, copper ware, crockery, provisions, casks, staves, lumber, wood, etc. Some of the casks are filled with water, and others are packed with provisions, clothing, and so forth. As the provisions are used up and the clothing and other articles are called for, the casks are ready for the oil. The greatest things on the ship are the whaleboats. There are no such boats anywhere in the



world. You'll find that's so before you come back. Now I'll show you the little house you are to live in for many long months."

He took me into the fore-castle. I went down the little steep stairway into a gloomy space largely filled with bunks. I wasn't so cheerful when I came up, and, as I walked home, I thought of the nice little room in which I had slept from infancy.

I have said that this was Saturday. In the evening my schoolmates came in. I did not betray my feelings. One of them said, "You look as happy as if you had just returned from a voyage." On the following day my parents and I attended service as usual, in the Bethel. This little church was founded especially for sailors and was located on what was named "Johnny Cake Hill." It still stands, looking just as it did sixty years ago. On the walls of the interior are cenotaphs erected to those who lost their lives on the deep. These had never interested me, but this morning, surrounded by sailors and realizing that this was my last Sunday at home, I thought of the perils in store for me as I read the following: —

In Memory of  
CAPT. WILLIAM SWAIN  
Associate Master  
of the Christopher Mitchell of Nantucket

This Worthy Man after Fastening to a whale  
Was Carried Overboard by the Line and  
Drowned

May 19th 1844

In the 49th Yr. of his Age  
Be Ye Also Ready, for in Such an Hour as Ye  
Think Not the Son of Man Cometh

The ship was at her anchorage in the lower harbor. In a few days came the hour of departure. Hitherto I had thought little about parting with my mother. Now the thought of it was distressing and the actual leave-taking heart-breaking.

My parents had provided me with a sea chest which was better looking and more costly than that of the average sailor. My father accompanied me to the wharf, where we found a large gathering, composed of sailors and their friends, who had come to bid them good-by. My father showed much feeling in his parting words, and like most fathers, he enjoined obedience, faithful discharge of

duty and exemplary habits. The realization of the life upon which I was about to enter came upon me with full force. My chest and I were taken aboard of a large catboat, and, as we slipped away, I saw my father standing on the wharf and was not conscious of the presence of any one else. An incident added to my discomfiture. Among all the chests mine was the most noticeable, and this fact elicited unkind remarks from some of my companions.

“It’s a boy’s box,” said one.

“Full of baby’s things,” observed another.

“Call it a fancy chest,” remarked a third.

“Call the young chap himself, ‘Fancy Chest,’” cried a fourth.

“So we will,” they exclaimed.

Then one of the men scraped his feet along the chest as if to remove the paint.

Immediately a large, powerfully built man thundered, “Take your feet off that box, and all of you let the young fellow alone.”

They obeyed, and my heart went out to my new friend. I didn’t know who he was, but I soon found out. It was three miles to the ship, and as we approached her she did look fine, and her appearance cheered up my rather



faint heart. When we were aboard we were told to get our chests into the forecastle, which I had visited before with the shipkeeper. The forecastle was supposed to accommodate eighteen, and the bunks were arranged around the sides in a double tier. The gloom seemed to deepen and, as I was told to take a bunk forward, which was one of the poorest, I thought of my mother and wished that I was at home. In a short time came the cry, "All hands on deck."

When we emerged some one told me to go forward and help work the windlass.

"It's time to weigh anchor," he said.

A "greenie" remarked, "I don't see how they are going to weigh the anchor; they ain't got no scales."

A general laugh followed. We set to work and one of the men started a rude chantey, and the old hands joined in. Chanteys are the songs sailors sing when at work, and the mere singing seems to make labor lighter.

At last the anchor came up. In the meantime men had been sent aloft to shake out the sails, and the vessel started on her long voyage. As I caught a glimpse of land and his-

toric land, too, often spoken of by the early voyagers, I felt as if I had sundered the last tie with home, and I found it difficult to keep back the tears.

Just then the shipkeeper came to me and said, "I'm going out in the vessel and coming back in the pilot boat. Now let me tell you something. Even if things don't go right, keep a civil tongue in your head. Do what you're told to do, and be respectful to those over you, and never try to be familiar with them. If you do, you'll find it won't pay. Now let me tell you something more. The first mate's name is Coster Lakeum. He sailed in this very vessel on the former voyage as third mate. He's a man who doesn't talk much, but he's a fine seaman. I've told him that while you look to be eighteen you're only fifteen. Don't ever try to be familiar with him, and he may prove your best friend in the ship. You'll be a lucky boy if he should take you for stroke oar in his boat."

We had to beat out to sea as there was a head wind. As the vessel tacked I was bewildered and wondered how any one could learn

the names of all the ropes and how to handle them.

“Get out of my way and get to work,” said a hard-looking, burly fellow, jostling me as he said it. He was an American of almost repulsive countenance, and a man for whom then and there I conceived a strong dislike. Well, I couldn’t work, for I didn’t know how to, and I noticed that all the greenies seemed stupid, like myself, and were at a loss what to do. The old sailors were handling the ship, and in a couple of hours we reached the offing, the pilot boat came up, and my good friend, the shipkeeper, shook me by the hand, and he and the pilot stepped aboard the little craft and were soon far astern. On our port were the islands, on one of which Gosnold made a temporary settlement eighteen years before the *Mayflower* anchored in Provincetown Harbor. While the islands bear the name of Gosnold’s Queen, their individual Indian names are still retained, and furnish a curious and interesting rhyme :

Naushon, Nonamesset,  
Onkatonka and Wepecket,  
Nashawena, Pasquinese,  
Cuttyhunk and Penikese.

## CHAPTER II

### AT SEA

When we were well out at sea the vessel began to pitch and roll so that I found it difficult to keep on my feet. I would find myself in the lee scuppers only to be thrown back again like a piece of rubber. I noticed how the old sailors tipped their bodies to avoid disaster, and I tried to get my sea legs on and partially succeeded. Even then I slid at times, and at last I got hold of a pin and held on. The man who had come to my help in the boat, when the sailors were making fun of me, came up and said:

“ You greenies are not much use until you have learned the ropes. We don't look to you at all the first day out. Now, boy, let me tell you that the chances are you are going to get sick before long, and, if you go down into the close, stuffy fore-castle, you'll be a great deal worse. I'm the first mate, and there's no objec-



tion to your sleeping on deck the first night out. If you do, you may sleep off the sickness and be all right in the morning."

So he pointed out a place, and I knew then that my friend was Coster Lakeum. Pretty soon I began to feel a little sick. It was a don't-care feeling, and it made the other sickness — the longing for home — all the more intense. Why did I ever leave my father's house? Why did I abandon my mother's love and care? I kept back the tears and I kept out of the way. When night came I stretched out in the place which had been pointed out and began to feel a little better. The air was bracing and the thought of home did quite as much to keep me from sleeping as the tossing of the ship. There was no one now to see the tears which ran down my cheeks. Sleep stole on, and, when morning came, I felt somewhat restored. I looked about for a place to wash in, and for a basin, but saw none. I came to the conclusion that sailors didn't wash unless they let themselves down into the sea. It was not long before I found out that water at sea was a luxury. It was kept in a scuttle butt by the cabin door, where a drink might be taken,

but there was none for washing. The sailors had to depend on rain and the sea. The cook, who was at the galley, called to me, "Come here, Sonny."

I started, but the ship gave a lurch and down I went. He gave a loud laugh, but there was something in the tone which showed that he wasn't making fun of me. I picked myself up, steadied my body, and at the right moment covered the distance without further mishap.

"Look here, boy," he said, "you're startin' out rather young, but you must be twenty."

This touched my pride.

"Why, I am only fifteen."

"Only fifteen? Well, I suppose you didn't have a very good home, so you were glad to go to sea."

"Yes, I had a good home."

I felt uncomfortable. The cook continued pleasantly, "The sailor's life is a hard one, but there are bright spots. Let me tell you to do as you are told to do and do your best. Feel a little squeamish, eh?"

"Not very much now, but I did, yesterday."

"And you will again, if you go down this

mornin' into that old forecandle, so I'll give you a little breakfast here, if you can hold on with one hand while you use the other. Eat little to begin with."

He gave me some coffee and a couple of pieces of bread soaked in something. I held the cup containing the coffee in one hand and the hard bread in the other, and, although more than once I thought they would slip from my hands, I managed to make my repast without accident. It wasn't long before all hands were ordered aft. I was now feeling pretty good, but I pitied the greenies who had passed the night in the forecandle — they looked so forlorn. They had evidently been sick and gave little appearance of being able to work.

We all huddled together and Captain Gamans, who was to be our master for nearly three years, proceeded to address us. The captain was a young man, not over thirty years old, of good size but not of very attractive appearance. He seemed inclined to be somewhat savage. The following remarks he delivered in a sharp, nasal tone:

"See here, you fellows, I'm boss on this



ship. I want you to understand you'll have to work and work hard. There's no hanging round on a whaler, as some folks think. Whalemen work a great deal harder than merchantmen. Now don't let me see any wasting of grub. I'll put the man who does it in irons for a week. The sooner you greenies learn the ropes and to box the compass, the better. If you don't, no watch below until you do. Competition between the boats is all right, but there must be fair play. Now for the boats' crews and the watches; and look out for yourselves."

Lakeum called out sharply, "Fall in line — old hands at one end, greenies at the other."

The order was obeyed, but the vessel rolled so that the greenies wobbled about considerably. The mates examined our ribs and arms in order to size up our probable strength and endurance, while the boat-steerers or harpooners stood by and offered suggestions. Then came the selection for the places in the boats, and to my great joy I learned that I was to be stroke oar in the first mate's boat. I felt grateful to Lakeum and the shipkeeper as well. The few who were not chosen were to remain

on the ship when the boats were down for whales. Long afterwards Lakeum told me that selecting a greenie as stroke oar was something of an experiment, but my size, the recommendation of the shipkeeper and the fact that I was brought up in a seaport town and knew something of salt water determined him.

Now came what they called "the picking of the watches." This was the duty of the first and second mates. There were three watches on our vessel. While those who made up a watch were on deck, the others were at rest or off duty. Between four and eight P.M. there were two short periods called dog-watches. That very day the crows' nests were built at the mastheads. In each case a pair of crosstrees was fitted to the masthead, upon each side of which was constructed a small platform. This provided a foothold. A couple of padded hoops were secured above at a point a little higher than a man's waist. With his feet on the platform, his body through the hoops and his arms resting thereon, one could look over the entire ocean, as far as the horizon, in search of whales.

In the late afternoon word came to shorten

sail, and several of us greenies were ordered aloft together with the old hands. This was my first taste of the real work of a sailor. When my feet touched the foot-ropes, young and agile as I was, I had considerable doubt about keeping my place. "Tip forward, as the ship goes down and hold on as she comes back, and be quick in knottin' your reef points," said an old tar beside me. I managed to hold on, but I was slow and clumsy in reefing. "Green at it, ain't you? Watch me," he declared. I was glad when I found myself descending the ratlines and was on deck once more.

That night I slept in my bunk in the fore-castle. I recall how close and stuffy it was, how the waves pounded against the ship, how some of the men, presumably the greenies, groaned as if in agony, how I longed for a kiss from my mother and for the little bedroom at home, and how glad I was when at four in the morning our watch was called and I went on deck.

Of all things on the ship the whaleboat was the most important, and few mechanics were more skilful than its builder. This craft was

sharp at both ends and was something like the model of an Indian birch-bark canoe. The bow and stern were high out of water. The bow rose above the rail in a Y-shape, and in this was a brass roller for the whale line to pass over. The boat was about thirty feet long, six feet in beam and a little over two feet deep. It was so solidly built that it could ride on a sea which would smash the ordinary boat of a merchantman to bits.

The whale line was about twelve hundred feet in length and was coiled in a large tub. One end of it was taken aft to a post in the stern of the boat called a loggerhead, around which two or three turns were taken in order to bring a strain on the line when a struck whale was going down or, to use the common expression, was "sounding." The friction caused by the line flying round the loggerhead often set it on fire, and it was necessary to throw water over it. The line was carried forward to the bow, and to it was attached a harpoon. To this line, at some distance from the harpoon, another short warp was attached, with a harpoon secured to the end. The purpose was for the boat-steerer or harpooner to



throw the second iron after he had thrown the first or, if this were impossible, to toss the second iron overboard, as otherwise it might catch in a man's clothing or endanger the other occupants of the boat.

The third day the work on the whaleboats was pushed vigorously. The oars were examined to see if there were flaws, and were then laid in the boats; the whale line was coiled down into tubs, new harpoons were fitted to poles, and these and the lances were placed in the boats. The whaleboat carried a sail, which was set when the wind was favorable, and was then steered by a rudder. At other times it was propelled by five great oars.

The boat also carried a hatchet, a water keg, a keg containing a few biscuits, candles, lanterns, glasses, matches, a compass, two knives, two small axes, a boat hook, waif flags, fluke spades, canvas buckets, a "piggin" for bailing, and paddles. A rudder hung outside by the stern.

The ordinary whaler carried four boats on the davits — three on the port side and one aft on the starboard side. Some whalers carried a fifth boat forward on the starboard side.

The first mate's boat was the one aft on the port side. This was the one to which I was assigned. It was called the "larboard" boat. And now it is to be noted that no whaleboat ever had a name. It even did not have painted on it the name of the ship to which it belonged.

On the fourth day the weather was mild and the sea calm. In the morning the order came to lower the boats. The lookouts were in the hoops at the mastheads, but there were no whales in sight. The truth is, the greenies needed practice and training to prepare them for the encounter with whales. Lakeum said to me:

"Did you ever handle an oar?"

"Oh, yes," I said. "I can not only handle an oar but I can do two things which my father told me most merchantmen can't do. I can swim and sail a boat."

"You may have to do both before this voyage is over," was the reply in rather a stern tone.

Each boat carried six men. If, when in pursuit of whales, the wind were favorable, the sail was set; if light, oars were used together

with the sail; if not favorable, the oars alone were used.

And now we were not to seek whales, but have our first practice in the imaginary pursuit. I had the stroke oar, which was nearly fourteen feet long. If this were regarded as heavy and clumsy, what would one say of the steering oar held by Lakeum, which was twenty feet long? When the boat was lowered, we scrambled into her and took our places. Another man and I were the only greenies in the mate's boat, and it turned out that he had never handled an oar before; as for myself, I was only used to light oars of moderate length. The sea looked very calm from the ship's deck, but when we had pushed off, we found that our great whaleboat was tossed about considerably, and this made rowing more difficult. I was anxious to do my best and I think Lakeum was aware of it, but he gave suggestions and orders in a tone which made me realize that he was my master.

The mate always helps the stroke oarsman. As Lakeum steered with his left hand, he pushed with his right hand on the handle of my oar. The other greenie blundered more



than I did and in such a way as to interfere with the others. The men made him the object of their ridicule, but Lakeum told them to be quiet. Take it all in all, some progress was made that morning, and we returned to the vessel with an appetite for dinner.

This suggests the food that was served to us. There were three messes,—cabin, steerage and forecastle. Meals were served at seven-thirty A.M., at noon, and at five P.M. As to the forecastle, the food was dumped in bulk into large pans and carried from the galley to the forecastle, where the men ate it from small pans. For drink we had tea and coffee sweetened with a kind of molasses. We had salt junk and also hard bread which was improved by soaking it to flabbiness, frying it in pork fat and deluging it in black molasses. Lobsouse, a favorite dish, was a mixture of hard-tack, meat and potatoes. Duff was made of flour, lard and dried apples. It was boiled in a bag and served with molasses.

We ate our food in the forecastle while sitting on benches in front of our bunks. Sometimes the meat was divided into as many parts as there were men. Then, as the carver asked,

“Who’s this for?” a man who had turned his back called another man’s name and the portion was given to him. This was repeated until all the men were served. Now let me say that during the voyage I never saw among the men a single act of selfishness or greediness. Often those who are uneducated and have had no social advantages are, in their relations with others, the most considerate and gentlemanly.

That afternoon the first vessel was sighted since leaving port. The captain was out with his glasses, and I heard him say, “It’s a whaler, and I know the managing owner’s streamer at the mainmast. The vessel’s the *Rhoda*, for she’s due about now and has made a splendid voyage according to the last report.” I asked one of the old hands how you could tell a whaler in the distance, irrespective of the owner’s flag, and he said, “Always by the boats. Can’t you see with your naked eye the three boats hangin’ at the davits on the port side?” This held good the world over. A whaler was always known by her boats.

While the whaler was a small vessel, she carried three or four times as many men as a

merchantman of the same size, because a large number of men was necessary when whales were pursued and captured. Besides the captain there were generally three or four mates or officers, four boat-steerers or harpooners, a cooper, carpenter, blacksmith, steward, cook, cabin boy, four shipkeepers or spare men, and sixteen to twenty seamen. Sometimes the same person was carpenter and cooper and often there was no blacksmith, the work of sharpening irons and so forth being done by others. On many whalers there was no cabin boy. On the *Seabird* there was neither blacksmith nor cabin boy, and a man named Jonas was both carpenter and cooper.

Of the four boat-steerers, I shall mention only the one on our boat. He was a Portuguese from St. Michaels, and his name was Manuel — a broad-shouldered, stalwart fellow, with a long, powerful arm. And he was also a fine fellow — kind-hearted and good-natured. We had several other Portuguese in the crew, natives of the Azores, one or two blacks from the Cape Verdes and also one Kanaka from the Hawaiian Islands.

One member of the crew deserves especial

mention. His name was Israel Kreelman, a native of Vermont. He was getting along in years and had followed the sea since his sixteenth year. He had never got above the berth of seaman, for while he did his work faithfully and well, he was not qualified for any higher position. Kreelman seemed to me, at first, rather austere, but in time I found him generally kind and companionable, and he took a real interest in me. I have spoken of the hard-looking American seaman who talked to me savagely and jostled me the first day out. His name was Jake, and in a few days everybody was afraid of him. He talked little, and when he did he was profane and abusive. I think it was just a week to a day from the day of sailing, when an event occurred which nearly ended in a tragedy.

Jake was ugly as usual and had some words with the fourth mate. He was cautioned in an emphatic tone. He did not seem inclined to retort, but directed his abuse against the food served to the men, which he called slush.

“There’s the coffee,” he said, “the captain and officers get the best of it in the cabin. Then they add water to what’s left, and this





*Jake partly lost his balance, and the captain seized him.*  
*Page 35.*



is what the boat-steerers and others get in the steerage. Then they add more water to what's left and that's what we get in the forecabin. It's nothin' but the captain's slops."

There was some truth in Jake's remarks, but the language used might have been more moderate. The captain was standing near by, and his face flushed rapidly.

"Look here, Jake," he exclaimed, "let me hear no more language of that kind. If I do, I'll put you in irons."

"You're a coward. You couldn't hurt a fly."

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Before the captain could move or reply, Jake whipped out a knife and made a lunge for him. I thought the knife was going into the captain's shoulder, but by a quick movement of the body he escaped. Jake partly lost his balance, and the captain seized him. The vessel was pitching and the outcome was uncertain. The captain seized the wrist of Jake's right arm, and just then Lakeum grabbed a marlinespike and knocked the knife out of Jake's hand. The men struggled fiercely for a moment, when Jake slipped a little; this put him at a disadvantage, and



down they went, the captain on top. They say you mustn't strike a man when he's down, but it may be that it depends on the man and the circumstances. At any rate, the captain gave Jake an awful mauling, and when he let him up and the mates took him away to put him in irons, his face looked like jelly. For several days everything went on smoothly and everybody seemed subdued. The only comment was made to me by Kreelman.

"Boy," he said, "I'm a common sailor and will never get any higher, but there are always two sides to a case. I've seen captains and officers do some awful cruel things, and when I was younger, I've suffered myself. But in this matter the captain was right. Jake's a bad man. I didn't like him from the first. What they want to do is to get rid of him, and they'll do it, too. Keep your eyes open."

"How will they do it?" I asked.

"Never mind, keep your eyes open."

I had heard of hanging men at the yardarm, and I assumed that, when Kreelman said they would get rid of Jake, he meant they would take his life in some way. I was uneasy and

distressed. However, I had little time for reflection, as I was constantly kept at work.

We had several days of pleasant weather and each day we took to the boats, and the greenies began to show great improvement in handling the oars. The thirteenth day from home was a memorable one. I supposed that the vessel was well on her way south, but a great surprise was in store for me. It was a beautiful morning, and it was not far advanced before a hazy outline appeared in the distance. As we approached, it grew more distinct, and I was so surprised and bewildered that I didn't even think of seeking information. Soon the object developed into a huge mountain, rising right out of the sea — in fact from six to seven thousand feet in height. It was evidently at one end of an island. Before long the vessel was put in stays. Then came the order to lower the larboard boat. The greenie who belonged in the boat was told to remain on the ship, and then Jake appeared in the custody of the mates, and was told to take the greenie's place in the boat. Jake's face was covered with scabs and scars, and he didn't appear so bold and defiant as he did before his

encounter with the captain. Lakeum steered for the shore, which wasn't over five hundred yards away, and I wondered what it was all about and particularly where we were going. My curiosity increased when on our arrival Lakeum shouted, "Twenty minutes shore leave." The men scrambled out of the boat — Jake, despite his beating, the most agile of all. In a minute Lakeum and I were alone.

"Aren't you going with the boys?" he asked.

"No," I said, "I'd rather stay here. Will you tell me where we are?"

"Where do you think?"

"I haven't any idea."

"Well, young man, this is one of the Azores. They call it Pico, and that mountain rising right out of the sea is one of the most wonderful things in the world."

I wanted to ask why we were there, but I knew that that was none of my business. Lakeum helped me out.

"There are two reasons why we are here. You've noticed that we've had no second mate. We are going to have one in a few minutes. It is no uncommon thing now for a

Portuguese to ship in New Bedford sometime ahead, and then go over to the Azores in the packet to see the folks and wait for the ship. This is our case. Mr. Silva's his name and he must live pretty near here, for our captain had his instructions just where to put the ship in stays. Now then, don't you see how Mr. Silva's helped us out?"

Lakeum, usually rather serious, laughed heartily.

"Puzzled again? Well, just hear me. Don't you see this is the way to get rid of Jake?"

"He'll come back, won't he?"

"Come back? We'll never see him again, and we never want to. As a rule we don't want a man who's in debt to the ship to desert, but this man is dangerous, and nobody's safe when he's around. We are only too glad to get rid of him. We've given him a chance, and he's taken it already."

"Why didn't the captain put back to New Bedford when the fracas was over and have Jake arrested?"

Again Lakeum laughed.

"Why, boy, that would never do. Some of



us would be called as witnesses, and the rest would disappear. The voyage would be broken up and the owners would be the losers. When the captain gave Jake his licking he gave him his judge and jury and everything else.”

We were at a little landing, and a road led up from it into the island. On each side of the road was a wall made of large blocks that looked like brown stones. Lakeum told me that these blocks were pieces of lava, that the island was volcanic and that there were on it many extinct craters. For the first time I saw oranges on the trees, and it seemed to me as if I had entered into a new world. Pretty soon down the road came a cart driven by a boy. In it was a man seated on a chest. The cart was unlike any I had ever seen. It was a crude affair, and the wheels were of solid wood. Lakeum greeted the newcomer as follows:

“Well, Mr. Silva, I never saw you before, but there’s no need of an introduction. I know who you are. I’m Lakeum, the first mate. Let’s get your chest aboard.”

Silva showed a row of dazzling teeth and Lakeum continued, “I gave the men leave.

There they are up the road, coming this way. They'll all be here in a minute, except one."

Silva showed his teeth again and said, "Hard ticket, eh? Got a good poundin', did he? But he's better off. The ship must stand it. He's spent the money the outfitter let him have — spent it before he came aboard, and he has got on a new suit, such as it is, and it ain't cost him nothin'."

Silva grinned again. Then the smile vanished, and lowering his tone he said, "I feel almost like desertin', too. I come back here to get married, and I've just left my little wife. I've been married only two weeks. She wanted to see me off. I couldn't stand it. It's a hard life we whalemens lead."

Though a boy, I was touched by the brave fellow's words. All the men showed up but one, and Silva took his place. As we pulled for the ship I knew that it would be many months before we should again pull for the shore.



## CHAPTER III

### ABOUT WHALES

We now bore away south — all hands anxious to see whales. One morning the captain called us aft and addressed us as follows:

“I want to tell you about the prizes. Every man who sights a whale that is captured gets a prize. If the whale makes fifty barrels or less, a flannel shirt; if over fifty barrels, five dollars. These are the prizes given away during the voyage. Then at the end of the voyage the owner will give two gold watches—and good gold watches, too — one to the man who raises the largest sperm whale during the voyage, and the other to the man who raises the largest bowhead, that is the whales that stow down the greatest amount of oil. Keep your eyes open.”

The name I went by was “Fancy Chest”, and it stuck to me to the end of the voyage. As we walked away, Kreelman said:

“ Well, Fancy Chest, what do you think of it? ”

“ Fine. ”

“ Not so fine as you think. The flannel shirt isn't good for much, and you can't spend the five dollars at any of the few places where we stop, for they don't know that kind of money. I went on a voyage once and got a so-called gold watch when we got home. It was pinchbeck. I had to shake it to make it go, and I shook it so hard it made my arm ache. ”

This was discouraging, and I was pretty well disillusioned. It was to be my fortune during the voyage to draw a watch, but I must withhold the story about it till the end of the book.

Kreelman continued, changing the subject, “ It's about time to have fresh meat. I'm about tired of hard bread and lobsouse. ”

“ Do they keep it on board? ”

“ Fancy Chest, you are still a greenie. Look in the sea and see what you see. ”

We had seen porpoises before, but never so many as there were now. They were dancing all about the vessel, as if bent on a frolic. One

of the boat-steerers went forward and rigged a platform just over the bow. Then he took his stand on it, with harpoon in hand. Two or three of the graceful creatures came up as if to encourage advances, and then disappeared beneath the surface. They were not near enough for the boat-steerer's purpose. Then a daring fellow leaped up as if to defy the harpooner, only to fall a prey to his iron. Soon another porpoise was captured. I looked at the pretty creatures lying on the deck — each about five feet in length — with some pity, which gave way to the pleasant thought of the approaching repast.

As I went by the galley the cook said, "You'll get something at dinner to make you feel good." And we did. The meat was boiled with "doughboys" or dumplings, and nice it tasted, too. This change in diet cheered us all, and that afternoon there was more contentment than I had seen any day since we sailed.

I had now learned to box the compass, and I knew the ropes. There used to be an impression that the duties of a whaleman were light. This is far from the truth. The labor

was incessant. There was no limit to the hours, and the work was often carried on in the night watches. Contrary to the general impression, the whaler was cleaner and more trim than the merchantman. And now a few words about whales, as we were soon to have our first chase.

Whales have lungs and warm blood, and their bodies do not differ much from those of a cow or a horse. There are several kinds, but in the good old whaling day only two kinds were of real value — the sperm whales or cachalots and the whales which yielded bone. The largest cachalot ever captured was nearly ninety feet long and nearly forty feet in circumference, and weighed about ninety tons! Think of it! One hundred and eighty thousand pounds! Now, if we say that thirteen men weigh a ton, a whale of this kind will weigh more than the entire population of a village of over eleven hundred inhabitants. It is also said that a large sperm whale weighs a good deal more than a hundred oxen, and has the strength of several hundred horses. The head is blunt and flat, and the skull sometimes measures more than twenty feet in



length. The eye is near the angle of the jaw; it has no lashes, and is about as large as the eye of a colt. The creature can see ahead or to either side, but the eyes are separated by the immense head, so that each eye seems to work on its own account; and this is thought to be the reason why sperm whales act so queerly at times. The most curious organ is the ear. It is just behind the eye and is so small that a pencil can hardly be inserted in it.

The lower jaw, which contains the teeth, is far smaller than the upper jaw, but it was regarded in whaling days of considerable value, for the posterior part called the "jawbone" and the teeth, which weighed about a pound and a half each, furnished the material out of which sailors made so many curious articles.

The sperm whale has no nose, but a substitute in a spouthole on top of the head.

The interior of the mouth is white, and the tongue is small and the throat large.

The head is, in size, about one third of the body, and in it is what is called the "case" containing spermaceti, formerly used in the manufacture of candles. It is dipped out with buckets, and sometimes fifteen barrels are



taken from a single head. What is this great oil case for? Some think that the animal draws upon it for nourishment during periods of food scarcity, just as bears store upon their bodies great quantities of fat to draw on later. The whales are covered with what is called blubber, which keeps them warm in cold water and relieves the pressure when they "sound," that is, go down to great depths.

The flippers, one on each side of the body, are not like the fins of a fish, but are the limbs of land mammals, covered with blubber to form paddles, and are supplied with bones, blood vessels and nerves.

The tail of the whale divides into two flukes, the distance across which is fifteen feet. This great weapon is used for a number of purposes — for motion, as a weapon when pursued by enemies, for play, called lobtailing, whereby he throws his tail high in the air and then, lowering it, smites the sea with terrific force, and for peaking, which is the tossing of the entire flukes with a part of the body in the air before plunging below.

When the whale so plunges below he is said to "sound," and, as he breathes like any other

animal, he must take in for his dive a great supply of air; otherwise he would drown. This great creature can hold his breath for a long time, and, when he comes up, the air in his lungs is heated, and, hence, as it is expelled into the cooler air, it condenses and forms a vapor. This is what one sees when the whale spouts. If this vapor touches the human skin, it stings. Now the spout of the sperm whale is rather a poor one. It doesn't go straight up, but goes forward for a short distance. The blowings are repeated sixty or seventy times at a rising, and then the whale goes down again, and remains below for fifteen to forty-five minutes, and occasionally for an hour or more.

Now what does the cachalot do when he is under water? It is believed that he goes to a great depth in search of cuttlefish or squid. Some of these dead cuttlefish thrown up on the shore are known to be forty to fifty feet in length, and, while some say that live cuttlefish of great size have been seen on the surface of the ocean, the statement may well be doubted. But it is known that fierce battles

take place under water between them and the whales; and it is a fact that dead whales have been found floating with their bodies badly cut and bruised. But the cachalot is generally the victor. The cuttlefish is not the only food. It is a fact that pieces of sharks have been found in the stomachs of sperm whales.

The most curious thing about the sperm whale is that in rare cases it produces ambergris, often worth its weight in gold; and this, it is said, is due to the cuttlefish. This material is solid, is generally ash-colored, is lighter than water and is fragrant when heated. It is a growth in the intestines of the sperm whale, produced, it is thought, by indigestion caused by the whale not being able to assimilate beaks and other pieces of cuttlefish so often found in the ambergris. Ambergris is generally found in cutting up the whale. Its chief use is in manufacturing perfume. It is not the perfume itself, but the substance which prevents evaporation.

The sperm whale is a great wanderer. He keeps away from the cold water of the extremities of the Atlantic and Pacific oceans,

but travels all over the rest of the watery world. How do we know all this? Because the whale himself has told us. Harpoons had stamped in them the names of the ship's owner and sometimes the name of the ship. Often a whale with the harpoon in him would make his escape, when the line parted, and afterwards be captured six or seven thousand miles away from the place of encounter with the harpoon still in his body.

Some of the antics of the sperm whale are striking. He will rise in the water and turn to look around him. Again he will raise his head above the surface and remain for some time in that position, bobbing up and down amid the waves. Then, suddenly turning, he will raise his flukes in the air and beat them upon the water with great violence. The sound caused thereby may be heard for many miles. This, as I have said, is called lobtailing. Then he will spring from the water so as to show a large part of his great frame. This is called breaching.

The female or cow cachalot is only about a third of the size of the male or bull. The mother goes far out to sea with her baby calf,



apparently fearing no enemy, and her affection for the little creature is very strong; so whalers would kill the calf first, for they knew that the mother would not forsake her offspring. The cow is said to show affection for the bull, for when the bull is killed the cow will stay by, only to be captured herself.

How do whales sleep? It is generally thought that it is when they are floating on the surface, either during the day or night. Both whalers and merchantmen are known to have run on to whales with a result similar to that occasioned by striking a rock or reef. If the whales had been awake they would doubtless have avoided the vessels. A famous case of collision was that of the *Union*, Captain Gardner, which sailed from Nantucket in 1807. At ten o'clock at night, when running at seven knots, she struck a whale with such force as to smash in the timbers on the starboard bow. The pumps were started, but the water gained rapidly and in a couple of hours the vessel began to sink. Three boats left the ship, one of which was abandoned, and the men were divided equally in the other two. There was a heavy sea, and the Azores



were over six hundred miles away. They rigged sails which were carried away by the gale, and the two boats were finally lashed together and for a time allowed to drift. They had little water, and the men were put on scant rations. When suffering intensely from thirst and hunger Flores was sighted. Captain Gardner and his men made six hundred miles in seven days and eight nights. This young master was only twenty-four years of age. He followed the sea for many years. In one of his voyages his encounter with a sperm whale resulted in a badly bruised body and a mutilated hand. This injured member is shown in the photograph of the old gentleman in the rooms of the Old Dartmouth Historical Society in New Bedford.

Now a few words about the whales which yield whalebone or baleen. It used to be said that the whale which yielded excellent bone and a generous quantity of oil was called the "right whale" to capture, and hence the name. Later its larger relative was found in the Arctic regions and called the bowhead, because of the structure of the fore part of the head, which is shaped like a half-circle.

The whalebone of the bowhead is much larger than that of the right whale, and in former days was more valuable. The slabs are in the upper jaw, and in a bowhead are often a dozen feet or more in length. When the mouth is closed these slabs slant back and lie between the two jaws. When the mouth opens they hang almost perpendicularly along the sides of the mouth, presenting the appearance of a screen, which, as the inner side of each slab is furnished with bristles or hairs, serves as a sieve. A bowhead once captured had two hundred and eighty-six slabs of bone on one side of the mouth and two hundred and eighty-nine on the other. The lower lip supports and holds in place the lower edge of the sieve, while the upper lip is drawn up. The right whales subsist on crustaceans, called "brit," which are taken in great quantities through the mouth and are strained out by means of the bristles on the inner side of the whalebone. The water flows out and the "brit" is caught by the sieve. The brit is yellow and so abundant in some latitudes as to give the appearance of extensive fields of golden grain. The right whales are said to eat fish,

if "brit" is not obtainable. The rushing of a right whale through a field of "brit" has been compared to a snowplow passing through a drift. He leaves behind him a trail of blue water, spouts with great force and is difficult to capture. Here we should note that the whalebone whales cannot see ahead of them.

While the bowheads are very heavy, they are not more than sixty-five feet in length. The tail is about twenty-five feet broad and six feet deep. One of these whales, taken in 1855 in the Okhotsk Sea by the ship *Adeline* of New Bedford, yielded two hundred and fifty barrels of oil, and another taken in 1861 by the *General Pike* of the same port produced two hundred and seventy-four barrels. The whalebone whales carry their nostrils on the summit of the head. There are two spout holes; they are f-shaped, close together, and are located about eighteen feet from the end of the head. As they are nearer the lungs than in the case of the sperm whale, the vapor shoots up straight, spreading as it rises. These whales are encased in a layer of blubber which is from a foot to two feet in thickness. It is softer, more oily and also more sticky than

that of the sperm whale. The tongue is thick and soft, is glued to the floor of the mouth, and generally contains about six barrels of oil, although it is said that the tongue of a very large bowhead has been known to yield twenty-five barrels. Such a tongue is equal to the weight of ten oxen. The flesh of the animal is coarse, firm and red in color. The flukes are very powerful. Hence the maxim, "Beware of a sperm whale's jaw and a right whale's flukes." While the sperm whale is a great traveler, the right whale never crosses the equator.

The female right whale is much larger than the female sperm, and at the breeding time she frequents shallow waters. Her affection for her young is very strong. It is said that she will clasp the calf with a fin very much as a human mother holds her child. The young of the bowhead mother is seldom seen, and it is thought that she keeps it under the ice until it is weaned.

The bowhead's method of feeding is like that of its relative, the right whale. The crustaceans in the North Atlantic and Arctic, called "slicks", give the water the appear-



ance of oily streaks. They are produced by different kinds of jellyfish and range in size from a pea to six inches or more in diameter. When the bowhead is feeding, the spread of the lips is about thirty feet, and the method of feeding is the same as that of the right whale.

Now what happened as the result of the pursuit of all these creatures, well called the leviathans of the deep? Let any boy or girl take the map and see where the whalers cruised and captured whales. Not content with Baffin's Bay, Hudson's Bay, the waters along the coast of Greenland and in the North Atlantic, around the Azores, Madeira, the coast of Africa, Ascension, Tristan da Cunha, the Falkland Islands, the Cape of Good Hope and the Rio de la Plata, the venturesome whalers sought the Indian Ocean and more particularly the great stretches of the Pacific and the Arctic Oceans. Now let the boy or girl look carefully at the map of the Pacific Ocean and see the multitude of islands in that great stretch of water. It is said that more than four hundred islands were discovered in the Pacific by American whalers; and, when one sees



the names of Nantucket, Howland, Gardner and Starbuck, he need not be told that the names were given by either Nantucket or New Bedford whalemén.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE FIRST CHASE

From early morn, when the men took their places in the hoops, to look for whales, there followed the regular order of the day. If the weather were good, the captain took his observations; the watches changed at proper times, and the men at the wheel and the look-outs were relieved every two hours. In the afternoon, usually at about four, the pumps were tested and the decks scrubbed. There was no noise in the ship save that occasioned by wind and wave and orders to the men. However, in the second dogwatch, which was generally about twilight, some fun was permitted. The men gathered, chatted and smoked. Rude strains were drawn from a battered accordion, while all the time the boat-steerers were at the bench aft the try-pot, engaged in whetting harpoons.

We had, in our day, the old-fashioned log

to determine the rapidity of the ship's motion, but it wasn't used very much, as in cruising for whales the speed of the vessel was of little consequence.

On the approach of a storm the merchantman sometimes failed to make preparations in season. Not so with a whaler. Only a few days after leaving Pico we encountered a storm. As the gale bore down upon us from the windward blackness, and the long range of wave crests grew larger and the situation became more serious, we were quick to shorten sail and, under storm staysails, met the gale without any fear. Higher blew the wind, heavier pounded the sea, our staunch boat shipped little water, though tossed about like a shell.

A week or more passed, and the men in the hoops saw not a single spout. Kreelman said to me, "Fancy Chest, the sperm whale, you know, is a low spouter — just a little bushy spout forward — and it's not easy to see unless the whale's near. The men with the sharpest eyes are the Gay Head Indians, and we've got one of 'em on board, and he's up in the hoops now. He can see a sperm spout if any one can."

Within half an hour came the gladdening cry from aloft, "B-l-o-w-s! b-l-o-w-s! b-l-o-w-s! There he breaches! There he white-waters!" The captain called out, "Where away?" "Two points on the lee bow." "How far off?" "Two miles, sir." "Keep your eye on him. Sing out when we head right."

The captain gave orders to call all hands, get the boats ready, square the mainyard, put the helm up, keep her off, stand by the boats and lower away. Then he took his glasses and climbed to the main crow's nest. The braces, sheets, and halyards were thrown from the pins, and then, while the men reached and hauled, the mates slacked away, the yards swung and the vessel came about. The boats quickly took to the water, and the crew swarmed down the falls and dropped into their places. The boat-steerers went forward, the officers aft. There was suppressed excitement, but no disorder. The wind was favorable, the masts were stepped in all the boats, the sails hoisted and peaked and the sheets paid out; and away we went. Each boat, of course, carried six men. As it happened, we

were headed for a "pod" or "school" of sperm whales. All the boats were in the chase, and the men left on the ship were the captain, the four sparemen or shipkeepers, the cook, the steward and the carpenter. The vessel fortunately was to windward and could easily bear down on a boat if it made fast to a whale. Here I should say that every whaling house had its private code of signals. As the vessel was often a long distance from the boats engaged in the chase, signals gave needed instructions. The signals were generally about fifteen in number. They consisted of the position of colors and of the sails. Thus the men were told of the location of whales they could not see from the boats, of an accident to their companions, such as a stove boat, or the need of their presence on the ship.

We had not gone a quarter of a mile before the wind shifted and we had to take in sail and resort to the oars. My feelings are so well told by Captain Robbins, an old whaleman, in his book called the "Gam" that I propose to quote his exact language. The captain says:

"I shall never forget the dazzling sensa-



tions of that first moment — the tall ship, with her checkered sides and her huge white davits; the two sharp-bowed clinker-built boats — five long oars in each — two on one side, three on the other; the sun-glint upon the oar-blades as they lifted above the surface, the white splash when they dipped again; the rapid, nervous, brutal stroke; the pose of the officers as they stood in the stern-sheets of the boats, each with his lifted left hand holding the steering oar, and each with his right hand pushing upon the stroke oar; and, yet more vivid, the one figure I could see in our own boat. For the mate stood last, steering with one hand and helping me row with the other.”

Just as Captain Robbins describes, Lakeum steered with his left hand and pushed on the handle of my oar with his right. He was an interesting figure as he urged the men on in a low tone, telling them at the same time not to make any noise. “It’s a pretty good pod and we ought to get a good-sized bull,” he declared. Of course, Lakeum was the only one in the boat who could see ahead. The rowlocks were thumbed with greased marline, to prevent any noise of the oars. Soon came

the order to take in the oars and use the paddles. Then I knew that we were close to a whale. In a few minutes we were told to take the oars again and await orders. I turned my head and beheld just in front of the bow of the boat a low black mass, and I saw the boat-steerer leaning forward as if awaiting the mate's order. The fateful moment had come and my feelings were intense. The boat moved ahead very slowly, and, just as the bow touched the monster, Lakeum shouted, "Up and let him have it." The boat-steerer rose in a moment and pushed his left leg into the clumsy cleat in the forward thwart. Then he rested the top end of the harpoon handle in the palm of his right hand, steadying it with his left. He hurled the iron with all his force and saw it bury itself in the blubber up to the hitches. Seizing the second harpoon, he threw it with equal success.

Lakeum shouted, "Stern — stern — all, and get out of the suds!" He and the boat-steerer changed places, — he to enter into a fight with the whale, and the boat-steerer to become the boat-steerer in fact. The whale threw up his flukes and brought them down

with terrific force. The sea was white with suds, but we got out of them safely. Down went the whale and out went the line with a whizzing sound which soon became a regular roar. The line went out so fast that it set fire to the loggerhead, and I put out the fire by pouring water on it.

“I never saw a whale get away so fast,” said Lakeum. “This boat’s nose may be under water any moment.”

The bow was then pretty close to the surface. In a moment Lakeum shouted, “All hands scramble aft!” This was to save us from disaster by balancing the boat.

I was somewhat alarmed and instinctively took the knife from the cleat on the thwart. The men rushed aft in disorder, due to the pitching of the boat, when a voice rang out, “Man caught; cut the warp!” I didn’t have to hack twice; the knife was as sharp as a razor, and one motion severed the line. A sharp cry came from the man who was apparently caught, and overboard he went. Despite my excitement and fright, I was foolish enough to think myself a hero, but I wasn’t. The whale was gone for good, but we were

temporarily happy in the thought that we had saved the man from a terrible death. The supposed averted tragedy, however, was more of a comedy. My severing the line hadn't helped the man any, for it happened that his foot had pressed on the warp and he had been merely thrown into the water, and, as he had hit a man on the way and knocked him over, the order was given by some one to cut the warp. The man in the water struck out for the boat and we soon pulled him aboard.

Lakeum's face changed color. He looked daggers at me. There were no whales now in sight, and he gave orders to pull for the ship. As he pushed on my oar our countenances were close together. For a time nothing was said. As we neared the vessel, the expression of anger and disappointment passed from his face. Lowering his voice he said:

"I don't think you are to blame or the man who gave the order to cut, either. You have to work quick at such times. I'll tell the captain about it and make it all right with him. On some boats there would have been a blast of profanity, and men who had done as you and the other man did would have got bread



and water for a week, but such treatment is wrong." He paused and then resumed, "That was easily a hundred-barrel bull, and he was worth pretty close to five thousand dollars."

Our boat was the only one which had made fast to a whale and the rest of the day on ship was a dreary one, despite the fact that the sea was quite calm and the sky without a cloud. In the second dog-watch the men gathered and talked over the misfortune of the morning. A few deplored the loss of the whale; the others made light of it and made me the target of ridicule and joke.

"Well, Fancy Chest, you cut the right line at the wrong time. You'll make a whaleman," said one.

"He's so smart that he'll be harpooning a whale with a knife, next time," said another.

"I guess they'll take that five thousand dollar whale out of Fancy Chest's lay," observed a third.

There was a loud laugh. Then Kreelman interfered:

"Let Fancy Chest alone. Put yourself in his place, you smarties. For a boy fifteen



years old he did well, and a man fifty couldn't have done better. Any old sailor would have cut the line as Fancy Chest did."

Kreelman was in a pleasant mood so far as his relations with me were involved, and ignoring the others, he observed:

"I think you are goin' to make a whaleman, Fancy Chest, and there are some things I can tell you about whales and whalin' that you don't know, although you've learned two things to-day from bein' in the boat. One of the things you learned is that the boat-steerer don't throw the iron with his arm raised but gives it a kind of thrust, and the other thing you've learned is that, after he's thrown the iron, he and the mate change places."

"And why is that?" I asked. "I can't see the sense to it."

"There ain't no sense to it, but it's been done since whalin' begun. People do things because their fathers did 'em before 'em. Many a whale's been lost because the boat-steerer, after a long chase, was all tired out from havin' to pull an oar. The boat-steerer ought to sit up in the bow and do nothin' until the whale's reached so that he can be in good

condition to strike. And after he's struck he ought to stay in the bow and kill the whale, and the mate remain in the stern. There are many things you ought to know. After a sperm's struck and goes down, he throws out a kind of oil called "glip." If the boat passes through this glip or crosses the line between it and the whale, he knows it and puts on more speed. Sometimes the sperm is cunning, for while soundin' with his head in one direction, he will turn and swim just opposite. Now as to the right whale — never follow his wake, for the moment the boat runs into his suds he knows it and makes off in great haste."

Kreelman continued, "Now, Fancy Chest, them that has book larnin' write about whales, but we old tars knows more than all of them fellows put together. Sperm whales talk to each other just as folks do."

"You don't mean that, do you?" I broke in.

"Talkin' air't always with words. There's another way of talkin', especially among animals, and whales is animals. Whales can pass the news from one school to another, so can one whale to another. The moment a whale

is struck, other whales in the neighborhood know it and either make off or, if the struck whale is a cow, draw near as if to give help. Can you explain it? I can't. Men in the hoops often notice that when their own boats is attackin' whales, a school several miles to wind'ard will appear to be frightened and disappear. Can you explain it? I can't. Sometimes there'll be a school of whales spread out over a long distance, and as if by signal they'll all go under at the same time. Can you explain it? I can't.

“ But there are lots of things whales do that remind you a good deal of human folks. Sometimes you see a lot of sperm whales together, and that's what you call a big school. Then sometimes you see a little school. Now both them schools may be all bulls, or they may be all cows, with just one bull to take care of 'em. In such case this one bull is a good deal of a gentleman, for, if there's anything from behind to cause fright, he seems to tell the ladies to make tracks, and he stays behind to look out for the enemy — whether it's a whaleboat or whatever it is. So this bull, with his caravan, goes travelin' all over the ocean. Now

you let any other bull come near and there's sure to be a fight. In one of my voyages we saw a fight in the Pacific Ocean. It was a fine day and a smooth sea. The lookout called out whales, and we lowered. It seems it was a school of cow sperms, and there was a big bull with 'em. As we were gettin' pretty near, another big bull, that had been soundin', come up not far off, and the two went for each other. Their heads come together with terrible force, and, believe me, you could hear the noise a mile away. Then they drew back and seemed to rest for a minute and then they went at it again. This time they locked jaws. But there was somethin' clumsy about it. They didn't seem to show the spunk they did when they first come together. The ladies all disappeared, and we men in the boats laid on our oars and watched the battle, pretty sure we'd get both fellows in the end, and we did. They tried to twist their jaws round without doin' very much, except that in wigglin' their bodies and rollin' round they made lots of suds. It was pretty certain that both of 'em was badly hurt. Our boat and another stole up quietly and we got both of them. And what do you



think we found out? Why, one of 'em had his jaw twisted and a number of his teeth torn out, while the jaw of the other was broken off, so that it hung only by the flesh. It's no uncommon thing to capture a whale whose jaw was long ago shattered and his head battered, and who's had an awful hard time to get food to eat because he couldn't fight the cuttlefish. We call them whales 'dry-skins' because the blubber makes so little oil."

"Did you ever see a cuttlefish?" I asked eagerly.

Kreelman was silent for some time. Then he replied:

"I've seen big pieces of 'em which come out of the stomachs of sperm whales, but I never see a live one, and I don't know any one who ever did. When you talk of them great things at the bottom of the ocean it kind of makes you creep. Some folks say that they've come up to the surface and run their big arms all over vessels and taken the crew under water and eaten 'em up. I never seen it. Whalemen don't like to talk much about the cuttlefish, but some do say that the whaleship which sees a cuttlefish never returns to port."



I saw that Kreelman was not disposed to continue the conversation. Just then Lakeum passed. Kreelman waited until he was well aft and then said:

“That’s a strange man. He seems out of place on this vessel. He’s a good sailor and all that, but there’s somethin’ about his life that we don’t know. He’s been edicated and he comes of well-to-do folks. He’s got a will of his own, but he treats the men fair, and you never hear no swearin’. The men in your boat say that if you hadn’t ’a been a greenie, you never would have cut the warp to-day, and that you would have got it straight in the face if any one but Lakeum had been mate of the boat. But he treated you well, and no doubt he’s made it all right with the captain by this time. Fancy Chest, that man’s name ain’t Coster Lakeum. Nobody never had such a name. No one knows his given name. Now you keep to yourself what I’ve said.”

I went to my bunk in a more cheerful mood, and that night I dreamt that I was boat-steerer and that I made fast to a sperm that stowed down oil worth five thousand dollars.

## CHAPTER V

### CAPTURING AND CUTTING-IN

I have said that there is a wide difference between a merchantman and a whaler. A ship that carries a cargo that is to be delivered must make the port of delivery with all possible speed. On arrival the sailors, who are paid wages, are not very likely to desert; and, if they do, their places are usually easily filled. The food on a merchantman generally strikes a pretty good average, because, in most cases, recruits are obtained in the ports visited. It is different with the whaler. There isn't so much variety to or change in the food on the whaler; the sail is shortened at night, and the slower she goes at all times the better. Her cargo is to be taken from the sea, and the whales are just as likely to find her as she is to find them. Then the whaler is a home, such as it is, for three or four years, and it is

the duty of the captain to keep away from ports as much as he can.

The *Seabird* took it very leisurely. Day followed day and we saw no whales. I had to take my place in the hoops, and I searched the sea for whales until my eyes fairly ached. I noticed that as we cruised farther south, most of the birds were different from those of the North Atlantic and far more numerous. The most interesting to me were the albatross. They would come very near the vessel. They seemed to float along rather than fly like other birds, and their cry was somewhat like the braying of an ass. It is said that when they have gorged themselves with fish and jellyfish, they will sit motionless on the water and may be taken with the hand. One of them seemed almost bent on getting on the ship, and some of the men, watching their opportunity, captured him and secured him on the deck. He measured fifteen feet in spread of wings. The plumage was soft and mostly white. The beak was long and hooked at the point and was of a delicate pink. The most curious things about him were his webbed feet with no hind toe or claw. The capture of the bird afforded

a pleasant change in our lives and provided a theme of conversation for the rest of the day.

After covering six or seven thousand miles, we reached the Rio de la Plata, called by whalers the River Plate. This is an estuary between Uruguay and Argentina, and is a famous whaling ground. Here once occurred one of the most terrible battles with a sperm whale of which there is any record. When struck, the whale cut the boat in two with his jaw and thrashed the wreck into bits. After the men were picked up, two other boats planted irons in him and he smashed both these boats to pieces. Of the men in the water, two could not swim, so they climbed up on the whale's back and sat down just forward of the hump. Another boat arrived and took all the men on board. The whale had six harpoons in him, but he made no effort to escape. Two spare boats having come up, the whale tried to sweep his jaw through the bottom of one of them, but the craft was, for a time, well handled. He succeeded, however, in rushing through the boat, and after four boats, about twelve hundred fathoms of line and all the whaling gear were lost, the whale made off.



Boylike, I fancied that all whales on this ground must be very fierce. If I had any fear, it was only for a moment, for I was anxious to hear the glad cry from aloft and to be ordered to the boat. Just a week from the day when we reached the ground came the welcome announcement, and all the boats were lowered. The whales were to the windward and pretty far off. Lustily we pulled, but as it happened the other boats led. There is sometimes luck or chance in the pursuit of whales, and so it was with us. A whale made a kind of detour and gave us a splendid advantage. We approached the creature in very much the same way as we had formerly approached the whale we had lost. The boat-steerer threw both irons successfully and we got out of the suds and avoided the awful sweep of the great flukes. The whale sounded, and the warp passed out quickly but not so fast as to draw the boat's stem very near to the surface. At last the line slacked, and we were ordered to haul in, hand over hand. As we did so, the line was coiled in a wide heap in the stern sheets, as in the wet state it would not lie very close. When the whale reap-



peared we were ordered to take the oars, and, when we reached the great black object, Lakeum drove the lance between the third and fourth ribs into his vitals. We pulled away, and the monster began to thrash like an animal in a fit; the water was crimson, and jets of blood at least six feet high leaped from the spout hole. They gradually diminished until the blood merely oozed from it. The whale made a final breach, fell on his side with a fearful splash and lay dead in his own blood and a lather of foam. Then came the cry, "Fin out!" Lakeum ran the lance into the whale's eye, to make sure he was dead, and then the tow-line was made fast to a slit cut in the spout hole. Here let me say that the whales we captured didn't all die in the same way. I remember one whale whose head rose and fell in the last struggle, while the flukes beat the water rapidly and vigorously. I remember more than one whale that performed the "flurry," that is, swam for a few minutes in a circle, to the peril of the men in the boat — that is, "milled" — and then rolled on his side, dead.

The whale we had just killed did, before

death, what sperm whales nearly always do. He threw up the contents of his stomach, consisting of pieces of cuttlefish. As I looked at the monster, I thought of the saying of Melville, quoted wherever whaling was carried on, and likely to be quoted so long as any one cares for the story of the enterprise, "A dead whale or a stove boat."

Another boat at some distance was also fast to a whale. There were no other whales in sight. If there had been, Lakeum would have "waifed" our whale — that is, planted in his body a barbed iron rod bearing a flag. We were now to tow our whale to the ship — no easy task, even in calm weather. The first step was to pass a chain around what they call the "small" at the root of the tail. One of the old hands, with a rope around his waist, climbed on to the slippery object and, with some difficulty, got a line around the "small" and thus enabled the men to secure the fluke-chain. We set the sail and we used the oars, too. The ship, which had worked to windward, bore down on us and lessened the distance. We got to the ship before the other boat referred to. They were all ready for us — cut-

ting-fall, spades and cutting-stage. The last named was a plank platform which reached beyond the carcass and just over the surface. Now it is to be remembered that there was only one boat on the starboard side, so that side was all clear from bow to gangway. The whale was secured by the fluke chains. The head was under the gangway and the tail was to the bow. The weather was good and so we "cut to windward", that is, with the whale toward the wind. In this way the wind filling the sails counterbalanced to some extent the weight of the cutting-falls, and helped to keep the vessel on an even keel.

Cutting-in required great skill. A bunch of blocks was secured above, through which a rope was passed and then carried to the windlass. The great, lower block, to which the blubber hook, weighing about a hundred pounds, was attached, was swung over the whale. Two men on the cutting-stage, provided with long spades, cut a hole in the body just above the nearer of the two side fins. A line in a half-circle was cut around the hole, and the hook was inserted. A little army of men singing their chantey began heaving at

the windlass. Then the ship careened to the whale, a sharp sound was heard, the ship rolled backwards from the whale, and the tackle rose with a strip of blubber attached. The strain caused the whale to roll over in the water, and, as the blubber peeled off along the line called the "scarf", it was hoisted higher and higher aloft till its upper end grazed the maintop. The men at the windlass ceased heaving and a harpooner with a long, keen weapon sliced out a hole in the lower part of the swaying mass. Into this hole the end of the second great tackle was hooked so as to retain a hold upon the blubber. Then he severed it completely, so that while the short, lower part was still fast, the long, upper strip, called the blanket piece, swung clear, and was all ready for lowering. The heavers renewed their chantey, and, while the one tackle was peeling and hoisting a second strip from the whale, the other was slowly slackened away, and down went the first strip through the main hatchway, right beneath, into the blubber room. This gloomy place was about thirty feet each way and between six and seven feet high. From a beam swung a lamp,



which gave a dull light. Blanket pieces weighed a ton or more each, and, as they were coiled away, they looked like hideous serpents.

While the floor of the blubber room was slippery at all times, it was particularly so when a heavy sea was on. Two men with short-handled spades hewed off blocks from the blanket pieces, called horse pieces, and pitched them up into a trough secured to the upper edge of the hatch. Then they were loaded into tubs and dragged away. The mincing of the horse pieces was performed at a wooden horse, placed endwise against bulwarks, the pieces falling into a tub.

The beheading of the whale required skill similar to that involved in the treatment of the carcass. He had no neck, and, as a fact, where the neck might have been was the thickest part of him. It was necessary to cut deep into the flesh and divide the spine at the point where it was inserted into the skull, not an easy task, as the whale tossed and rolled in the sea. If the whale had been a small one, the head would have been hoisted on deck, but, as it was a large one, it was held against the ship's side and partly out of the sea. The



upper part of the head is called the "case." A block was arranged so that it hung down from the yardarm, and a man dropped down to the head. A light tackle called a "whip" passed through the block. Then came the task of beheading the whale, which was no easy one.

It is to be noted that the other boat which I have mentioned as fast to a whale succeeded in killing the creature — a cow — and towing her to the ship. She was secured astern to await the disposal of our cachalot. I have forgotten to say that while cutting in the first whale, the sea was full of sharks and the air thick with birds. This was not peculiar to our case, but was common wherever a sperm whale was cut in. Sharks! Sharks! Sharks! Squirming, darting, wiggling, showing their white bellies as they turned this way and that and displaying rows of huge teeth as they opened their hideous mouths. Their efforts to tear off pieces of blubber were not very successful, but the fact that they remained by the whale and showed no disposition to depart seemed to indicate that they knew that a treat awaited

them when the carcass was to be cut from the ship and to drift away.

“Isn't there any danger from these creatures?” I asked Kreelman.

“Not very much. A shark is an awful coward, unless he's sure he's got the better of you. I've seen one of 'em jump clean out of water to try to get a man on the whale's back, but, instead of that, a man on deck got the shark with a spade, and, as he fell back in the water with the blood flowing, the other sharks got him. Now and then one of 'em will jump out of water and fall back among the others, not so much for exercise but to show how hungry he is. Then it isn't always easy to get him with a spade, but I've seen it done.”

The birds hovered about twenty feet above the carcass. They were of all varieties, sizes and colors. Their screaming and screeching were enough to drive one distracted. I had read of the wild pigeons, that flew in such great flocks a hundred years ago, that for a time they shut off the light of the sun, and, as I gazed at the winged vampires, I could not help thinking that a not very large increase in their numbers would serve the purpose of

a dense cloud. Just then there was a great commotion in the water.

A man holding a spade declared, "They always do that just before one of 'em jumps out. You can't always get him, they're so quick, but I'm goin' to try if I get a chance."

Hardly were the words uttered when a huge shark leaped into the air, and the chance of which the spadesman spoke was an easy one, as it happened, for the shark rose to a considerable height and so turned his body as to present a good front for a spade. The man who had spoken drove the implement clear through the fellow, and, as he held the handle fast, the great weight of the body detached the spade, and out gushed the blood as the shark fell back into the sea. If there was commotion before, there was turmoil now, and, as the sharks devoured their unfortunate companion, the water was red with blood. The birds came lower and increased their shrieking. The awful scene was not soon to be forgotten.

The "case" was full of pure spermaceti and constituted nearly half the head. In a large whale the case contained nearly three

tons of spermaceti. This is the way our case was baled out. A bucket was attached to one end of the whip, and the other end was held by a couple of hands on deck. These hoisted the bucket. The spermaceti bubbled like new milk and was emptied into a large tub.

After the blubber was stripped from the body and the contents were removed from the head, these members drifted away, and, to the relief of everybody, the sharks and birds followed the carcass. And now the ship was reeking with oil and grease — a fitting preparation for starting the try-works. The relief spoken of was only temporary, for the cow whale took the place just vacated, and the air was again thick with birds and the sea filled with sharks.

And what was the reward for all our labor? The whales were first sighted by the Gay Head Indian, and, as our whale yielded sixty barrels, the Indian received five dollars. As for the crew, we were given a great treat. Our customary food was, of course, lobsouse, but now to it was added, at supper, a limited supply of gingerbread. That was all. But now trouble arose over a garment. The boat-



steerer who struck the cow whale asked for a flannel shirt, and most of us heard the discussion between him and the captain.

“Why do you want a flannel shirt?”

“Ain’t I entitled to it, sir?”

“Why?”

“I struck the cow.”

“What if you did? I ain’t offered any prize for striking or killing a whale. Only the Gay Header is entitled to a prize and he’s got it, because he sighted the whales, and the first one made over fifty barrels.”

“Well, it seems to me that when whale is sighted and there’s a pod of them, that after the mastheader gets his prize of five dollars for the first whale captured, the boat-steerers of the other boats, who strike whales that are captured, ought to get a flannel shirt each.”

“Yes,” said the captain scornfully, “and then the boat-steerer who struck the first whale captured wouldn’t get anything at all.”

This observation pretty effectually disposed of the boat-steerer’s argument. But the men did not allow the discussion to die. A few days after, when the oil from the two whales had been stowed down, some of the crew took



the matter up in the second dog-watch, and showed real intelligence in the presentation of their views. The boat-steerer's contention met with no favor. The general view was that the capture of every whale in reality justified the bestowal of five dollars or a flannel shirt upon the mastheader and that, even if four or five whales were taken from one pod, he was entitled to all the prizes. This was, of course, liberal interpretation. The incident seems to us now unimportant, but I recall how, as a boy, I listened to the debate, how deeply interested the men were in the discussion, and how it ended with the remark of one of them, that it didn't make any difference what they thought on the matter, as the captain was likely to save all the money and shirts that he could.

## CHAPTER VI

### TRYING-OUT AND ROUNDING THE HORN.

And now came the trying-out. The try-works were placed between the foremast and mainmast. The timbers underneath were of great strength and capable of sustaining a mass of brick and mortar. They were some ten feet square and five in height and were secured to the deck by heavy knees of iron. The try-works were covered by a hatchway, on removing which two great try-pots appeared. When not in use they were kept clean by an application of soapstone and sand. The furnaces under the try-pots were furnished with heavy iron doors. Under the enclosed surface was a reservoir which was supplied with water as evaporation went on.

The first fire in the try-works was started with wood, but, after the oil was tried out, the pieces, called scraps or fritters, served as substitutes. Thus the whale supplied his own

fuel. The horse pieces had to be minced, and the clank, clank of the mincing machine was constantly heard. At night the sight was a novel one. As the blubber was thrown into the heated pots, the flames leaped out of the doors, the smoke rolled away in great volumes, the oil pitched with the pitching of the vessel and the smutched faces of the watch made the scene all the more gloomy. Was there ever a whaler that didn't have plenty of cockroaches? If so, ours was not one. As the heat increased, out came the little fellows and ran about in search of new abodes.

The work at night was carried on under the glare of blazing cressets, called bug lights, hung from the davit heads. These cressets were supplied with the scraps taken out of the boiling oil. The light they gave could be seen for a long distance, and, though we had not seen a sail that day, the light that night brought a vessel to us. She came very near and wanted to know if we were on fire and needed help. She was a merchant vessel bound for New York, and, as she went on her way, the pleasant incident made us feel grateful and put new vigor into our work. The

deck was so slippery from oil and blood that at times it was difficult to keep on one's feet. The boiling watch lasted six hours and, when it ended, the released men presented a sorry sight with their dirty, cold and clammy clothes and their faces showing such intense fatigue. As they went to their rest, choking with smoke and carrying a sooty deposit in their nostrils, they were happy in the thought that there was no longer occasion for harsh language among the men and still harsher commands of the mates. And yet I should modify this statement, for the work was not one of continuous hardship, for at times we made a show of merriment by nibbling bits of fried blubber and frying doughnuts in the grease. Later in the voyage we dipped biscuit in salt water, heaved them into a strainer and boiled them in the oil; also with the help of the steward, we made fritters of the brains of the whale, mixed with flour, and cooked them.

The hot oil was strained into a large copper cooler, where it settled, and was then poured into casks — not always an easy task while the vessel pitched and rolled. The barrels were coopered, the hatches removed, and the



barrels lowered into the hold. The casks were of various sizes, some of them containing three hundred gallons or more. When the oil was all stowed down, came the clearing up. Crude sperm oil, which was of a golden tint, and lye made from the burned scraps were excellent for cleaning. Soon deck and rigging were as orderly and presentable as if the whaler were a regular merchantman. The two whales yielded sixty and thirty barrels and the work of trying-out went on without a rest for three days and nights.

We were now getting south, and we were told by the old hands that it was probable that we should see few whales before rounding Cape Horn. No one yet had made any demand on the slop chest and, as the clothes of some of the men were getting a little worn, the crew began to make use of needle and thread. It used to be said that a whaleman could be told by his patches, and we had proof of it in the work of some of the men. My clothes were in good condition and, while my mother had taught me to sew and to patch a little, I was glad that I was not one of the first ones to attempt repairing. I watched the



others, and I found it hard to repress a smile as the good-natured blunderers plied needle and thread. One man patched a dirty, dark garment with a piece of white cloth. Another attempted to sew on a button by carrying the thread over the side or edge. A third put an old jacket inside of another, sewed them together and patched the openings. He said that he did this in order to have something warm to wear when going round the Horn.

I have said that the men were kept busy on a whaler. Yet life was not all labor and peril. There were times when the sailors were allowed to engage in "scrimshawing", that is, carving and decorating sperm whale's teeth and bones. Jawbones of the whale were towed astern so that they might bleach to a dazzling whiteness. The lower jaw was lashed down to ring bolts, the gums were lanced with a cutting spade, and the teeth were drawn out by a tackle rigged from above. They were then pickled in barrels of strong brine. Another way was to leave the lower jaw on deck until the gums rotted and released the teeth. A few whalers had delicate tools with which they carved out sketches of whales

and whaling scenes on sperm whale's teeth, but most of the work was done with crude tools and sometimes with a jack knife alone. In using pieces of the jawbone, the whalers seemed to favor "jagging wheels", so popular for crimping purposes. They were probably thinking of the pies they had enjoyed in their distant homes. The best collection, probably, in the world, of these curious and now valuable articles, will be found in the rooms of the Old Dartmouth Historical Society of New Bedford.

We were now off the Falkland Islands, when a sail was sighted. The lookout announced that she was a whaler. He knew that, of course, by the boats she carried. Word was given to write letters for home as quickly as possible. It was evident that the approaching vessel desired to "gam" because she was bound home and wanted to learn the latest news. The social feature of whaling was gamming — that is, the ships exchanged visits by boats' crews, the two captains remaining for the time on one ship, and the two first officers on the other. Another method as well was to let part of the crew of one ship visit

the other, and, while the captains and officers were in the cabin, the men gathered forward, chummed, smoked poor tobacco, sang songs, danced to the notes of a battered accordion, played games, and, perhaps, listened to the yarn of some good story-teller.

The vessel we were interested in proved to be the *Billow* of New Bedford. The captain with a boat's crew boarded us. They were bound home after a four years' voyage, with a good cargo of sperm, and had heard nothing from New Bedford for nearly a year. As we had been out a considerable period, there was little or nothing to communicate, but the visit did everybody good and, as the boat returned, we gave them a lusty cheer.

This very day, as there came a lull in some work I was doing for Lakeum, he said, "Where are we now, Bleechly?"

"Off the Falkland Islands."

"What's on the starboard side?"

"The Strait of Magellan."

"Who was Magellan?"

"A great navigator."

"When did he discover the Strait?"

"I think in 1520."

“ Did he go through? ”

“ Yes, but he had an awful time of it.”

“ How did you learn these things? ”

“ Read them up.”

Lakeum continued, “ Now, Bleechly, you know how it has quite often happened that, when a sperm whale has been struck, the line has parted and years afterwards the same whale has been taken at a place far distant from the place of the first encounter. Let me give you a real case. I am told that just about where we are now, many years ago a boat of the bark *Resolute* of New Bedford, belonging to the whaling firm of Justin & Davidson, struck a sperm. He was a big fellow and put up a great fight. They had to cut the line, and he went off with the harpoon in him. Several years afterward, the same vessel, at a spot in the Indian Ocean seven thousand miles away, captured the same whale and cut out the harpoon in him. When they had cleaned it they found the imprint, Justin & Davidson.

“ How did the whale get to the place where they found him? ”

Lakeum, who, as I have said, was a man of good education, delighted occasionally to



ask questions with a view of testing my knowledge, and in this case the location of our vessel suggested the questions themselves. I had been so successful in responding to his queries about the Strait of Magellan that I did not want to fail in this second exercise. I set out to say that the whale swam to the Pacific Ocean, but was restrained by the thought that Lakeum was in earnest and that the remark would be regarded as impertinent.

“Think it over and let me know in half an hour.”

I could have gone to Kreelman, but to solicit his help would not have been fair. It occurred to me to think over the habits of whales, and immediately the whole thing was perfectly clear.

“Can you answer the question?” said Lakeum, later.

“I think so. The whale made the Indian Ocean by way of the Cape of Good Hope.”

“Why?”

“For two reasons. He didn’t go by the Strait of Magellan because the sperm hates soundings, and he didn’t go round the Horn because the water was too cold.”



“Go to the head of the class,” was Lakeum’s remark as he walked away.

These little manifestations of interest in me were particularly pleasing, and assured me that I had, in this fair and just but rather mysterious man, a true friend.

And now the weather became more disagreeable and the ocean more boisterous. The men put on their warmest garments, and the dread of the passage of the Horn was relieved a little by the thought that with favorable weather we should catch a glimpse of the Magellan Clouds and the Southern Cross. And sure enough we did. The Magellan Clouds are nebulæ in the southern part of the heavens — that is, they constitute a beautiful, bright patch in the sky far different from anything I have ever before seen; but the Southern Cross impressed me even more. It is a small constellation of four chief stars forming a cross. The brightest star is the southernmost. The stars are white except the northernmost, which is of an orange color. The constellation looked to me more like a kite than a cross.

Though the weather was severe, the old hands said that we were making an excellent

passage and the chances were that we would soon find ourselves in the Pacific Ocean. It was the severest weather I had yet seen, and I thought that, if the passage were an excellent one, I certainly did not care to see a rigorous one. The prediction that we would soon find ourselves in the Pacific did not turn true. We were nearly round the Horn when we met with awful weather. There were sleet and a head wind for ten days. During this time we just held our own. To add to our discomfort, the cook found it difficult to run the galley, and our food was poor and there was not much of it. The distress and misery were shown in every face, and the only cheer came with the announcement that the captain had decided that, if the weather didn't change for the better on the following day, he was going to turn about and make the Pacific the other way.

"That's a good many thousand miles," said Kreelman, "but he won't make the Pacific that way. He'll make it as we are headed now."

"What makes you think so?" I inquired.

"You've got some book larnin', Fancy Chest, but you don't know everythin'. Did

you ever see the moon? I haven't been to sea for years for nothin'. Well, the moon changes to-morrow in the afternoon. About two o'clock you'll see the sea go down and the wind shift too, and we'll go ahead and round into the Pacific a-swimmin'."

"Do you think the moon affects the weather that way?"

Kreelman gave me a look of scorn and contempt, and, without answering, walked away.

The night was the wildest we had known, and the morning broke with disheartening prospects. During the rest of the voyage I never saw such an angry sea or knew such a dreadful storm. As noon approached the waves began to go down and the wind to subside. By two o'clock the weather was fair, and the wind had shifted in our favor. Every one was contented except Kreelman. His discontent related only to me; for, as he passed me on the deck, he gave me a withering look. The next day Kreelman was more genial, and I thought I would see if he was approachable. I observed:

"I studied up the Pacific some before leaving home, and I suppose that we are now going

to whale it off the coast, and then farther west on the Offshore Ground."

All he said was, "Water and fresh stuff."

This was a puzzle. I didn't want to betray my ignorance, and, while the man had been helpful to me in many ways, I didn't warm up to him very much when he was in the wrong mood. I determined to find out what he meant, if I could, from another source.

I have said little or nothing about our single Kanaka. He was of the color of his race — not very dark — a good sailor, good-natured, lusty and diligent. He had shipped on his first voyage at Honolulu and had seen something of the world — more particularly of the world of water. Born in a sunny clime, he did not like cold weather, and he had suffered greatly in rounding the Horn. He had picked up considerable knowledge from observation and experience, and he had what people call in common language "horse sense." In the second dog-watch I went up to him and said:

"Oho, I suppose that we are going whaling now."



“Whale as you go, but I tink cap’n, he go get to drink and eat.”

“What do you mean by that, Ohoo?”

“Me tell. No good water, old stuff to eat.”

“In other words, Ohoo, the captain wants fresh water for us all and fresh things to eat, and he’s going to stop at some island to get these things.”

My inference was right.

“Dat it.”

“What island do you think?”

“Me dunno, but me tink Quesas.”

I wondered where Quesas was. I had taken great interest in geography at school, because, I suppose, of my fondness for the sea. I knew that the Pacific was studded with islands, but I could not recall any island of that name.

Ohoo resumed, “Me dunno as me call him right, but not all Quesas; he not all Quesas, he somethin’ before dat.”

Then it came to me.

“Is the name Marquesas?”

“Dat him, dat him.”

“Do you know about these islands, Ohoo; for there are more than one?”

Then he told me the names of two of them.



I could not understand his pronunciation, but the real names I learned later. Nukahiva he called Newkeva, and Roa Pona he called Row Pew.

“Newkeva be fine place — plenty good water, plenty everytin’ else. Row Pew, he fine place, but me no like him. Long ’go dey take Kanaka and eat him.”

“Cannibals?” I inquired.

“Me no know canny bells. Me know all ship bells.”

It was all clear now. The drinking water was almost unendurable, and every one from the captain down was longing for fresh food. There was no sign of scurvy, but scurvy might at any time appear. The Kanaka’s guess seemed reasonable, and the thought of having a drink of good water once more and a sufficiency of fruit and vegetables, as well as other things, was as pleasurable as the feeling that for once I had the opportunity of getting the better of Kreelman. The next morning I said to him:

“I say, Mr. Kreelman, shall we take on our recruits at Nukahiva or Roa Pona?”

I put an accent on “Mr.” and I spoke in a

tone which indicated confidence in the statement.

“Who told you that we are goin’ to stop at them places — Lakeum or the captain?”

“Neither of them. The captain hasn’t spoken to me but once since we sailed, and then he told me to get out of the way. Lakeum’s talked with me some, but he’s never mentioned stopping anywhere for recruits. You’ve been long enough at sea to know that captain and officers don’t hobnob much with us common sailors.”

“Look here, young fellow, don’t you get smart with me. I’m as good as anybody. Now I want to know who told you that we are goin’ to recruit at the Marquesas.”

“I keep my own secrets, Mr. Kreelman.”

I permitted a little bit of a smile to come to my countenance, and, as I walked away, I felt that Kreelman, although really a friend to me, was as curious as any old busybody, and I resolved not to furnish him with the information he desired.

Within a week we struck and killed two sperm whales, which stowed down about a hundred barrels. There was nothing unusual

in their capture, and the incidents attending cutting-in, trying-out and stowing down were similar to those we had already experienced.

Now came an interesting episode, its first occurrence, but to be repeated frequently during the rest of the voyage. Three men wanted things out of the slop chest. I supposed that that chest was an enormous affair, several times the size of a huge trunk — an article of superior finish like mine, only three or four times larger. I found out that the slop chest was only a figure of speech and that there was no real chest at all. The clothing and other articles were put in large casks, which later were to be filled with oil, and were only taken out as they were called for. On this occasion the men wanted light shirts. So the carpenter, who had charge of the business, brought up an armful of cheap shirts for the men to make the selection. The garments were of different sizes. As a man held one of them against his body, to determine the fit, a button fell off. There was a general laugh. Some one called out, "They charge for these shirts twice what they are worth, so they'll make a deduction of five cents for the button." The

laugh was renewed and the carpenter endeavored to repress it. The appearance of the captain was followed by silence. The carpenter gave the name of each man and the garment selected, and the captain made entries in a book. As far as I could see, the men didn't have much to say about the price of the articles, and after making the entries the captain did not announce them or, if he did, it was in a low tone. Resort to the slop chest was more frequent later, but it ceased to be of interest save to the participants.

I knew little, practically, about navigation, but I could tell something by the sun, and I was sure that we were bound for the Marquesas Islands. One morning no one was ordered aloft. This was the first day since our departure when the crow's nest was not occupied.

The Kanaka said to me, "Me know what up. See land soon."

The prediction was realized, for within an hour came the glad cry,— "Land ho!"

It was now April, 1860, and, with the exception of the bleak and barren coast of Terra del Fuego, this was the first land we had seen

since leaving Pico, and, in all this time, we had not had a case of scurvy or any kind of sickness, and hence an unopened medicine chest.



## CHAPTER VII

### RECRUITING AND SHORE LEAVE

Otaheite, generally called Tahiti, was originally the garden of the world. After the white man came there were great changes, but not for the better. The soil remained as fertile as before and fruits and flowers were just as abundant, but the natives lost the charm of simplicity and innocence, and many of them imitated or adopted the bad traits and habits of the whites. A similar misfortune befell Nukahiva, so we were informed that we were not going into the harbor, but were to get water at a place on the island some distance from the settlement. The captain, we were told, was familiar with the spot, as he had been there before. The men had been looking forward to shore leave, and there was much disappointment, but the privilege of going ashore to fill the casks with water, even in an uninhabited country, was something. Just

think of it — to walk once more on the earth after all these months of virtual imprisonment in a whaling vessel!

I heard the captain say to Lakeum, as we approached the shore, “Good anchorage and deep water, and, when the men get ashore, quick work, too.” Hardly had the anchor touched bottom when the casks were lowered, and certain men were picked to man two boats; I was happy in being one of them.

“They don’t want no deserters here,” I heard an old hand say.

The pull was a short one. We landed at a beautiful spot and there, before us, was an expanse of tropical splendors. How nice it was to feel earth beneath one’s feet once more.

“You don’t have to bail and fill here,” said Lakeum.

This was the expression of a fact we were all aware of, for down an elevation only a few feet from the shore poured a bounteous stream of water. When the casks were landed, came the order “Let every man drink all he wants.” We drank as animals drink, with our faces to

the stream. Oh! What luxury! It seemed as if we never could get our fill, but the word came, "Better stop now and drink again after the casks are filled." A canvas hose with a square mouth was forthcoming, and in less than an hour the casks were filled and bunged up by the carpenter. Then we drank again to our hearts' content. We were soon on ship, the casks were raised, the windlass was started, the ship took the wind and away we went. The men who had been compelled to remain on the ship were alternately noisy and sullen. We who had been permitted to land were equally discontented, for our brief taste of this tropical paradise only made us long for more. We fancied that we were now to seek the "Offshore Ground," and that it would be many months before we would see land again. A pleasant surprise was in store for us.

The following day was so beautiful as to be beyond my powers to describe. We had a fair wind, and the air was not excessively warm. I think we all felt rather indifferent, and the recollection of the spot we had left the day before did not quicken our energies. In the

afternoon the crew were called aft. Captain Gamans stood with hands in his pockets, and we knew that he was about to address us. Was he to upbraid us for something we had done? That seemed improbable. Was he to convey to us bad or good news? We were anxious to know. The captain took the pipe out of his mouth and spoke as follows:

“You men know that just so often you must have a supply of fresh water and a change of food. We’ve got the water, and now we are going to get the food. The owner put aboard of this vessel a lot of cotton cloth, fancy prints, shoes, fishhooks, axes, hatchets, pipes, bar soap and a lot of other things for trade. Now you see if you go into port like Nukahiva, where the natives have become what you call civilized, there’s no barter but money, and you pay a good deal more for things than they are worth. If you trade with the natives where there’s no money, and they ain’t been civilized, you can get a lot of recruits for a mere song. That’s what we are going to do. We are bound for Roa Pona, and we’ll be there to-morrow. After the trading is all done, there’s going to be shore leave



for everybody. I have been there before and it's a good place to trade, but it's just as well to keep your eyes open. About twenty years ago a whaler went in there to trade and took on board a native as hostage and left on shore a Kanaka, a foremast hand, as the other hostage. In the night the natives killed the Kanaka and roasted and ate him. So now, in trading, ships take a native hostage, but they don't give one. The trading is done in and from boats, and it's slow work and takes half a day. The second day's when you have shore leave, and you can take ashore what trinkets and odds and ends you have, if you want to, and trade with the women for the things they make. You may want to take some of these things home with you to give to your folks.

“Now there's one thing more. When I was here, before, there was a beach comber on this island named Pete Ellyon. He's a deserter from a New Bedford whaler and acts as a kind of trader and interpreter. He's meaner and lower than the meanest and lowest native, and you'd better look out for him. You can't offer a sailor a greater insult than to call him a beach comber. This man Ellyon's folks are



pretty decent people, and he's had some education, but he's a renegade."

There is no need of saying that the address afforded us great satisfaction. Early the next morning land was sighted, and a favorable wind soon brought us within a mile of the shore. A curious-looking boat, containing three natives, approached. It was curious in that it had so little beam and was so light and fragile. It was built for speed and not for carrying merchandise. One of the men boarded our vessel, and from signs he made and from his familiar air, we knew that he offered himself as hostage and that he had already served in that capacity. His dress consisted of a cloth around the loins and a broad-brimmed straw hat. He was brown-skinned and his arms were tattooed.

Soon we saw boats leaving the shore, and we dropped our boats to meet them. All the articles and fittings which a whaleboat carries were taken out of two of our boats, and what little trade we took (and we didn't take much) was placed in one of them. Each was towed by a whaleboat, one of which was in charge of the captain and the other of Lakeum. The

meeting was about half a mile from the shore. The sea was remarkably calm. While the boats of the South Sea islanders are generally not made for commercial purposes, the two which approached were exceptions. They were large, clumsy affairs, each propelled by two men, and in one of them was a white man with a scraggly beard and a repulsive countenance. He wore a tattered straw hat, rusty trousers and an old dirty shirt. There was no need of an introduction. We knew that he was Pete Ellyon. Our own captain did not even deign to address him. In one of these boats were yams which resembled potatoes, some of which weighed from twelve to fifteen pounds, tarrows, which resembled turnips, oranges, bananas, breadfruit, coconuts and other vegetables and fruits, and in the other boat goats, pigs and fowl. The trading went on slowly. Bargains were made largely by signs, Ellyon serving as a hindrance; for as he spoke both English and the local jargon, he constantly interrupted the proceedings and always, of course, in the interests of the islanders. It took the whole morning to transfer the entire merchandise to our boats, and I was

astounded to see how little of our own trade we parted with. I remember particularly two transactions greatly to our advantage — one in which the captain gave a small hatchet for about five bushels of oranges and a dozen bunches of bananas, and the other, in which he traded three yards of cotton cloth for a large pig.

When we reached the ship, the bananas were suspended from the lower rigging, the fruit and vegetables were deposited in the two spare boats which were turned over for that purpose, and goats, pigs and fowl were taken care of forward.

“Them live things will go faster than the vegetables and fruit,” said one of the men.

And now we put for the open sea. When the hostage was aware of it he gave a shriek and started to jump overboard. Lakeum and Silva grabbed him, and he was soon in the place reserved for men who are put in irons. The crew were excited and almost mutinous, for they had a double grievance: they felt that they were to be deprived of shore leave and that the poor hostage was to be carried away as a captive. The whole matter was soon ex-

plained. Now that the trading was over the captain feared that the hostage, if not restrained, would jump overboard and swim ashore, and he wanted to retain him until after the men had had shore leave on the following day. The vessel was merely to move about on short tacks during the night.

The morning was one of the loveliest I ever saw. The sun rose without a cloud, and the water seemed tinged with gold. The Kanaka and three other men declined the general invitation to go ashore and they and the captain served as shipkeepers. The Kanaka said, with great emphasis, "Me stay here; dey get no chance to eat me." Most of the crew had articles or trinkets, and I took with me about a third of the cotton cloth my father had given me. The captain said that, if the women and children were gathered on the beach, there was little to fear.

On our arrival there they were, and the only man with them was Pete Ellyon. Just up the beach was rich, thick foliage, and an apparently dense forest beyond. I heard Kreelman say, "This looks kind of suspicious. That vile beach comber is the only man here, and it



wouldn't surprise me if there was a gang of natives up there in the bushes." The women were fine-looking, wholesome creatures and, when they smiled, they showed beautiful, dazzling teeth. The boys and girls seemed rather shy at first; they were well-shaped and pictures of health. There was a remarkable display of articles for trade — necklaces and bracelets made from richly tinted shells joined together by a kind of thread about like silk and made, I suppose, from some plant or vine, and an abundance of other fancy articles which one would think beyond the conception of savages. However, these people were plainly superior to the ordinary South Sea islanders. There were beautiful little mats and baskets made of tapa, which is the bark of the paper mulberry, and there was a lot of clubs, spears and paddles with wonderful carvings made with sharks' teeth or bits of shells. As the trading went on, Ellyon was particularly pleasant and gracious. He would say, "Don't let them cheat you;" "Offer the woman half as much cloth as she asks for"; "These young ones round here are regular thieves; look out for 'em." At first I won-



dered why this change from yesterday and then began to suspect that he had some sinister purpose. When the business was over, I was no longer the possessor of the cotton cloth, but rejoiced in the ownership of a number of articles which I proposed to take home to my mother, and of a spear, a paddle and a club, which I intended to show to my young friends and to preserve as mementos or trophies.

“Now, boys,” said Ellyon, “Come up on the island and let me show you round. There’s no spot on the earth any finer than this. There’s fruit of all kinds and plenty of shady places where you can lay down and rest.”

We all wanted to go, but there was no response, not even a word of thanks on our part. Most of us suspected treachery. We had no firearms and, in case of ambush, we would be defenceless. On first seeing Ellyon, the day before, and listening to his babbling while the trading was going on, I would have said that it was impossible for so repulsive a creature to be so polite as he now was.

“Come, boys, come,” he repeated, “I don’t suppose you’ve had shore leave before on this voyage, and now make the most of it. Where

are you bound to, 'Offshore Ground' or 'Coast of Japan' before you go to the Arctic? I take it you're goin' to the Arctic. There's nothin' like terra cotta for a man whose been treadin' wood at sea for eight or ten months. We gentlemen, who live in these Pacific Ocean islands in order to spread civilization, are only too glad to entertain our guests from the homeland. Come along to my lodge up on the high land."

The captain had said that Ellyon had had some advantages, but the reference to terra cotta drew a smile from one at least of the crew. I think he saw it, for his expression changed. Then in a moment he was pleasant again, and insistent that we should accept his hospitality. It was now time for our good manners, so we thanked him cordially and pleaded our excuses. One man had not walked any distance for so long that he had almost forgotten the use of his limbs; another preferred to rest by the sea and simply enjoy the beautiful prospect; a third was so exhausted from rowing that he was incapable of further effort, and so on. The beach comber now played his last card. "Shipmates," he

declared, "there's a lot of rum up in my place. I can't bring it down here, but, if you want to go up there with me, you shall have all you want of it."

Most of the men became greatly interested. No grog had been served during the voyage, and the very word "rum" had a pleasant sound.

"You see, shipmates," the beach comber continued, "you folks at home don't know what rum is. The rum you drink is made from molasses — that is, made second-hand. Did you ever hear of Jamaica rum, worth its weight in gold — the smartest drink on the other side of land that ever tickled the palate? And why, shipmates? Made from the cane first-hand, and not from molasses, second-hand. And how is it on this side of land? Right here on this lovely island is the finest rum that is made on any island in the Pacific. From what? The sugar cane. By whom? Peter Ellyon. I've got a still that beats the Dutch. Now come along with me and enjoy yourselves."

If safety had been assured I think most of the men would have accompanied him, but the

old ship, which had been our home for so many months, now began to look more attractive than this garden spot. One of the crew, who during the voyage had bewailed his lot in being deprived of liquor, accepted the invitation cheerfully. We all stared at him, but there was no disposition to sound a warning in the presence of Ellyon.

The two men walked up the beach to a little opening in the trees and disappeared. Our men were ordered to be ready to man the boats. I heard a man say, with a laugh, "He didn't call himself Pete, but Peter. He's pretty high-toned, even out here among savages." Another man said in a very low tone, "What was Lakeum up to in not stoppin' that man from goin'? He'll never come back, sure."

The women and children showed no disposition to go, and this seemed to indicate to me that, while our departed shipmate was rather imprudent, there was reason to believe that he would return. I was right. He did return and in a hurry. Suddenly there rang out a piercing shriek; the women and children disappeared, and out of the thicket sprang our shipmate, followed by Ellyon, and ran for us





*Out of the thicket sprang our shipmate. Page 120.*





like a deer. Word came to push off, and into his place leaped the man as agile as a cat. The crews bent to the oars, and there on the beach stood our would-be entertainer, his face fairly livid with rage. He sent after us a torrent of vile language; strange to say, no natives appeared on the shore, and, as we widened the breach, the form of our late associate was still visible and still active, but the billingsgate language kept growing less and less distinct.

It was no time to learn the story of our shipmate's adventure. When we reached the *Seabird* our boat remained in the water while the other boats were raised. There was soon commotion on the deck, and the hostage appeared in the custody of a couple of the men. By sign and gesture he was ordered into our boat, and he complied. It was not a long haul to a spot suitable to dump him. Lakeum declared:

“See here, hostage, there's your friend on shore. He's waiting for you and you'd better go overboard.”

The hostage was indifferent. Lakeum smiled, and then imitated a man about to leap over. The hostage, who had rebelled when he

thought the ship was bound out to sea, still seemed indisposed. Lakeum laughingly declared, "We will do what is usual under the circumstances."

Lakeum and another man seized the native and pitched him into the sea. There was nothing cruel in the performance. The sea was the man's element, and he struck out in the direction of Ellyon as if he was going to rejoin an old companion.

And now, what was the explanation of the adventure of our shipmate with the beach comber? It seems that Ellyon insisted on his companion taking the lead on the ground that he would have an unobstructed vision, and there was much that was beautiful to behold. The man, who, by the way, was not overburdened with intelligence, entertained no fear and complied. They had proceeded only a short distance when an enormous snake crossed the path, and, in order to avoid colliding with him our man stopped suddenly, and Ellyon, having no warning, ran into him with such force that Ellyon was thrown to the ground. As our man made all speed for the shore it was the enraged Ellyon who let out the shriek.

Hence we knew that the vile language he showered on us as we pulled away was prompted by the mishap.

In the second dog-watch the day's doings were the theme of conversation. What was Ellyon's purpose? Did he intend to lead the men to their death and then endeavor with the help of the natives to capture the ship? Or was he merely socially inclined and anxious after so long a separation from his own people to entertain us for the pleasure it afforded him? Something, of course, hinged on his alleged production of rum. If his story was true, there was some reason to credit him with good intentions; if untrue, it was evident that he had designs upon our lives and not upon our property, for we hadn't any property. His story as to the rum was discredited by one of the men, who declared that all vegetation on the island was very rank, and that the rum made from cane which grew rankly was of poor quality.

"That settles it," said one of the old hands, who was something of a wit, "Ellyon never had any decent rum in his life, and this rank stuff he makes is as good as any he ever had.

What he calls good rum we sailors would call slops. Judge the old renegade by himself. I don't believe he meant no harm. The trouble is he got knocked down, and that made him angry."

Ohoo, who had been a listener, now observed, "Me no go in boat 'cause fear trouble. Cap'n tell o' Kanaka killed and eat on island long 'go. That Kanaka man my uncle. Beach comber, he bad man. Good luck for crew get back. Ship good 'nough for Ohoo."

As we broke up, Kreelman came to me and asked pleasantly, "How did you know, Fancy Chest, that we were goin' to stop at the Marquesas?"

"I guessed it from what Ohoo told me."

"What did he tell you?"

I felt like saying that an old sailor may be very much like an old woman. However, I graciously told him of the inference I drew from Ohoo's remarks.

"Fancy Chest," said Kreelman, "if you live long enough you'll be a boat-steerer or a lawyer, I don't know which."



## CHAPTER VIII

### THE PRIZE WHALE AND THE RESCUED BOAT

I have said little about the cook, who was so kind to me the first morning at sea. He was always pleasant and obliging, and he used to say that he only regretted that he couldn't prepare for me some nice little bits like those my mother used to cook for me at home. One day I said to him:

“Why is it that you scrape out the plates so carefully and then put the scrapings into a big cask? Why don't you throw them overboard?”

“Because I'm a money getter. Don't you know what slush is? Why, it's the scrapings of the plates. I've heard it said that they use it on some ships to slush the masts with. Not on this vessel — worth too much. I put it in casks and there it stays till end of the voyage. It don't rot, gets sweeter all the time. When voyage is over, sold to be made over, and out

comes beautiful, rich lard. Goes to the best restaurants and brings big prices. I get my lay in the slush."

"I never heard of such a thing," I declared.

"I make out of it in another way," he continued.

"How's that?"

"Why, I scrape the plates so carefully that often they don't need washin'; so I save labor."

All this was said seriously; and I have to say that I was not disturbed. I thought it a joke that the rich should regard as a luxury what we poor sailors discarded as worthless. And then I thought that, if the story had been told to me before I left my father's roof, I should have been inclined to disbelieve it."

The cook continued:

"Now that we've got fresh stuff on board, let me tell you this. You know that the cabin gets the best, the steerage, where the under officers, boat-steerers and carpenter eat, next best, and the forecastle last. Nevertheless, you folks will get some of it, and I'll do my best to make it taste right. Now let me tell you that in this warm weather the forecastle is no

place to eat in, so I've asked Lakeum to let me serve the boys on deck, and he's given his consent, and this will be done so long as the weather's warm. After that back to the fore-castle. You boys will sit on hatch and wind-lass, and I'll serve the food in a new way. There'll be two tubs, one of them called the meat kit, into which I'll dump the boiled meat, and a second, without any name, into which I'll dump the vegetables. Then every man will help himself. Coffee in the mornin' and tea at night, I'll serve in buckets. The fruit they let the boys have they can eat as they please, so long as it lasts."

The adoption of this new method seemed to cheer the men up. One advantage was that we were disposed to converse more than we did in the gloomy fore-castle, and pleasantries were indulged in. The good manners noticeable in the fore-castle were not discarded on deck. Food may not have been partaken of according to the requirements of polite society, but each had due regard for the rights of others, and there was no sign of greediness.

I have said that I was not a great success at the masthead, and I repeat it. My vision may

have been poor or I may not have had very good luck, but good fortune came in an unexpected way. A few days after leaving the island I stood in the hoop, looking out on a sea that was hardly moved by a ripple and on a sky that was clear of clouds. I think I have said that a whale will suddenly appear when for some time not a spout has been seen from the ship. The belief is that the whale must have sounded at a place a long way off and then made great speed under water. While I was scanning the horizon, suddenly my attention was attracted by a spout not more than two hundred yards away, and I shouted "B-l-o-w-s, b-l-o-w-s, b-l-o-w-s. There he breaches! There he white waters." I saw just enough of the whale to convince me that he was a large one.

Silva's boat was the first to take water, and that boat was the one which got him. When the whale was fast to the ship, Silva said, "I never see such a whale in my whalin'. He's the biggest fellow I ever see; he'll make a good deal over a hundred. When we struck him he didn't seem to show no spunk. I never see a whale with such weak flukes. He didn't make





*I shouted "B-l-o-w-s, b-l-o-w-s, b-l-o-w-s. There he  
breaches!" Page 128.*





much more suds than a washwoman makes, and, when he sounded, it wa'n't no more than a boy divin'. The line went out so slow that you'd think there was a child pullin' at the other end, and we didn't lose no more than eighty fathoms. And he ain't no dry skin. His jaws is all perfect. He ain't been fightin' with no whale. There's somethin' the matter with the big fellow, but I don't know as we'll find out."

Turning to me, Silva said, "See here, young fellow, I guess you've got ahead of all the boys. Seems to me you'll be sportin' a gold watch when you get back to New Bedford."

One may fancy how pleased and elated I was. The whale was the largest we had taken, and it was possible that we might take one larger, but not very probable. The blubber peeled off in splendid strips and appeared rich in oil. The general opinion was that the whale would yield at least a hundred barrels, and one man's estimate was a hundred and twenty.

"I've sailed the seas most of my life and the largest sperm we ever took made a hundred and ten," said one of the old sailors.

When the blubber was stripped off and the head severed, the body rolled over; and then a man, who had a spade in his hand, uttered an exclamation.

“What’s the matter?” some one asked.

“What’s the matter? Look at that big bunch.” He pointed to a spot where the intestines were greatly swollen. “There’s something in there, sure. I don’t know what it is. I never see anything like that before.”

“Well, I know what it is,” said Captain Gamans, who was passing. “Give me that spade and I’ll show you what it is, even though it’s the first time I ever saw anything of the kind.”

The captain pressed with the spade, and the intestines opened and disclosed a large substance, which he declared to be ambergris. There was great excitement, and the buzzing reminded me of a gathering of gossipers. While deference, of course, had to be paid to the captain, yet every one had something to say about the preservation and uses of this strange and valuable secretion. The truth is, no one knew anything about ambergris, for a man might spend his life on a whaler without

ever seeing a whale which carried a pound of the substance. The captain ordered a large tub to be brought. This was lowered, and a couple of sturdy Portuguese descended and lifted the mass into the receptacle. When it was landed on deck the buzzing was resumed as the inspection proceeded. Every one had to feel of it. It was hard and apparently perfectly formed.

Now the truth was, the captain didn't know any more about ambergris than the foremast hands. Addressing Lakeum, he said, "We shall have to take this stuff home with us, for it's so valuable I wouldn't dare ship it, and the question is how best to take care of it. I suppose the best thing to do is to put it in a small cask and head it up and then put the cask into a bigger one filled with water. This will tend to keep it cool and preserve it. What do you think?"

"This is the first ambergris," said Lakeum, "that I ever saw, and I confess that I don't know how to treat it. What do you say if I ask the crew if any one of them knows anything about taking care of it?"

The captain assented. Only one man responded to the inquiry. It was Kreelman.

“I never was on a whaler that took any ambergris, but a man who was on the *Tiger*, which took a whale in 1848 which had a lump that weighed a hundred and fifty pounds, told me that they made a great mistake. He said that they kept it moist and it kind of spoiled, and he said that, if they had kept it dry, they would have got ten thousand dollars more for it than they did.”

The captain said nothing, and the men were ordered to their tasks. His expression was not pleasant, for it was evident that he did not like a statement, apparently reliable, which ran counter to views he had just expressed. But it is a fact that the ambergris was kept dry during the remainder of the voyage. It took over three days and nights to cut-in, try-out and boil down our leviathan, and stow down the oil. Just before the figures were announced, there was a resumption of the guessing. The best guess was a hundred and nine barrels; the actual yield was one hundred and eleven barrels and four gallons. After the cleaning up, the whale and his product consti-



tuted the topic of conversation among the crew for a long time.

In the social hour they made all manner of fun of me, or rather of the prospective watch. One said that the watch would prove to be second-hand; another that it wouldn't go; a third that when it was wound the noise would be as loud as that made by the winding of a clock; and a fourth that watches of the kind were sold at five dollars the gross. They evidently endeavored to draw me out, but I was silent. Then they took up the ambergris and, in a serious way, began to discuss its value and uses. Several men thought that it was the perfume itself, but Kreelman insisted that it was the substance which prevented evaporation. Then tales were told of the fabulous sums which druggists had paid for the substance and more fabulous tales about the size and weight of various lumps of the article. Then some one asked:

“Does Fancy Chest get the ambergris beside the watch?”

One would think that such a foolish question would only have elicited a laugh; instead, it gave rise to an animated discussion.

“If he does get both, he’ll be a kind of Crocus,” another declared.

“And who was Crocus?”

“He was a rich man — lived in New York — had more money than any other man in the world.”

Though I was a boy, I had seen enough of my companions to know that any proffer of enlightenment would be resented; so I did not tell them that Croesus was intended.

In answer to the first question, one of the men said, “This is the way I look at it. If sightin’ the biggest whale wins a prize, then the ambergris in it, which is so rarely found in whales, is a prize also and belongs to Fancy Chest.”

The countenances of most of the men betrayed anxiety, but the expression changed and there was a roar of laughter when Ohoo said, “If Fancy Chest get watch and ambergris, den he get whole ting — de blubber, jaw bone and teeth. Why not? Dat ain’t no common sense.”

The discussion now went on in a milder way and was quite prolonged. It ended with the emphatic statement of Kreelman:

“Everybody, from captain down, has shipped on a lay. We all have our lay or share in the whale, and everything in him. If Fancy Chest shipped on one one-hundred-and-eightieth lay, that’s his part of the ambergris, and that’s all there is to it.”

There was now general acquiescence, and I silently concurred.

The next morning I was in the crow’s nest and the Gay Head Indian was, too.

“I see somethin’,” he said.

“Where?”

“Off there on the weather bow.”

I scanned the horizon earnestly and then asked, “What is it — a pod or a single whale?”

“It ain’t no whale. Can’t you see it — just a faint little thing?”

I regretted my defective vision. The Indian leaned forward, showing by his attitude and fixed look that he was intensely interested. I heard him mutter; and now I, too, was greatly interested. I fancied I could see a faint outline. The Indian renewed his muttering and suddenly broke out, “Boat ahoy!”

Up came the captain's voice, "Where away?"

"Three points on the weather bow, sir. Looks like a whaleboat."

It was almost time for the Indian and myself to be relieved, but fortunately we remained aloft long enough for the Indian, at least, to make out the object and announce the situation.

"Whaleboat, sure," he said.

By this time the object was plain to me and I was soon able to make out a boat. The Indian kept gazing intently and began muttering again. Before long he shouted for the captain's information:

"Only four men rowin'. Looks like one man hurt."

When we descended, we found the carpenter out with the medicine chest. It seemed to me as if time never passed so slowly. Did the boat belong to some vessel which had suffered shipwreck, and had its occupants been forced to resort to the awful expedients of famished sailors, or had it merely lost its ship and been only a few days astray? This last conjecture was the more probable, as we were cruising on



*Prize Whale and the Rescued Boat* 137

a whaling ground, and, though it was of vast extent, it was rarely traversed by merchant vessels. As the boat came near us, the ship was hove to. The Indian was right; there were four men at the oars, and the man not rowing was bent over as if he had been injured. To the captain's hail the reply came from the man with the steering oar:

“Boat of the bark *Magic* of New Bedford — struck a whale late yesterday afternoon. Man's arm caught in warp and injured. Warp cut, lost bark, been out all night.”

The injured man was the first to be helped aboard. He appeared exhausted and was evidently in great pain. It is wonderful how gentle and tender rough men can be when their services to a sufferer are suddenly invoked. The man sat down on the hatch and was first given a generous drink of New England rum. Then the captain and carpenter proceeded to relieve him of his jacket. This was done very slowly, and gently done, too. Even then the patient winced and his face bore witness to the pain occasioned. The garment removed, an unpleasant spectacle was presented. The sleeve of the shirt was satu-



rated with blood, which was dry, black and coated, and this evidently had staunched the flow as his companions in the boat had had no means of treating the injured member. The cook brought warm water, and the carpenter soaked the sleeve until it parted from the flesh. Then he severed the sleeve near the shoulder and the bruised arm was revealed. First, washing it so as to remove any lint that might adhere, and applying a lotion with the delicate touch of a woman, he then wound the bandage around it with the skill of a surgeon. The sufferer was then allowed the freedom of the cabin.

“A good job,” said one of the sailors. “He done so well, Peter, why don’t you have him take your tooth out?”

Peter, a good-natured foremast hand, was suffering from toothache and was very disconsolate. He said that he had never had any trouble with his teeth before, and that this was the first tooth to decay. I think he was pleased with the carpenter’s medical proficiency and anticipated the extraction of the tooth without much suffering. Peter was told to lie down on the hatch, and then there fol-

lowed one of the most barbarous practices I ever beheld. Forceps were then in use, but the carpenter had none, and used the old-fashioned rollers instead. The tooth was really ground out of the man's jaw in a way that reminded me of grinding sausages. He bellowed like a wild animal, and the tears stood in his eyes. His glance showed resentment rather than gratitude. Yet the carpenter did his best with his old-fashioned implement.

Kreelman said, quietly, "Carpenter, surgeon, blacksmith, dentist, all one."

The mate of the rescued boat told an interesting story. In the late afternoon they had lowered, and, after a long chase, had made fast to a whale; a kink in the warp had led to the accident and the warp was cut. It was nearly dusk, and the ship was not to be seen. They took what they thought was the proper direction, but no lights were observed.

"If we don't pick her up to-day, we'll heave to at night and pick her up in the morning," said Gamans.

On inquiry, it was found that the *Magic* had made a fine voyage and was on her last

cruise. This was pleasant news, and word was passed round that the men on the watch below might write letters to be taken by the *Magic*, if we were so fortunate as to gam with her. That evening our visitors were exultant over their successful voyage and made us feel rather small with our moderate amount of oil. One of the *Magic's* men was very boastful, and described incidents in their voyage of an extraordinary nature, which did not lose anything, however, from the man's telling them. After he had pretty well talked himself out, one of our men asked:

"What do you think your cargo will amount to? When we left port, sperm oil was the lowest it had been for a good many years, and your catch, I suppose, is all sperm. You ain't got no bone, and you didn't go in the Arctic as we are goin'."

"Well, our captain says it'll bring about ninety thousand dollars."

The man looked round with an air of triumph.

"Ninety thousand dollars is a good deal of money," he continued.

"Yes, it is, but we took about seventy-five

thousand dollars of merchandise in a few hours, and we've been out from port considerably less than a year," observed one of our men.

The remark was greeted with a derisive laugh.

One of our visitors retorted, "It would take a good many months to get seventy-five thousand dollars' worth of sperm oil, and a good many weeks to try-out and stow down."

"We've got a patent machine. We do it all in one job."

"Pshaw! That's nonsense."

"Men are pretty smart whalemens," continued our man, "when they can pick out a whale that's got a lump of gold in him."

"You don't mean to say ——" The man stopped.

"Yes, I do mean to say that we've got stowed away a lump of ambergris that's worth more than half your catch of over three years. Suppose we change the names of the vessels and call our ship the *Magic*?"

The announcement, coupled with the laugh which followed, was too much for the visitors, and the conversation turned to other subjects



— the common things which pertain to a sailor's life, such as the food, the weather and relations with the officers. When the crews of different vessels meet, boasting is inevitable. Kreelman said afterward that he never saw, at a gam, men so completely squelched as were the sailors from the *Magic*.

We hove to that night, as the captain said, and at dawn the crow's nests were manned by lookouts who were instructed to seek sharply for the *Magic*, although whales were not to be ignored. Soon a mastheader announced the top-hammer of a distant vessel, and, before long, the two ships were in a position to gam. The *Magic* dropped a boat and her captain headed it. When it came alongside he leaped to the deck and shook hands with our captain. The two men, who were old friends, conversed earnestly and there was something interesting and delightful in their meeting by chance, many thousand miles from home, on a great ocean, which constitutes a pretty large part of the entire globe. The captain of the *Magic* wanted the last news from home, and our captain gave him what little information there was. Then Captain Gamans remarked,



“Now let me tell you the latest news of this vessel. We’ve got on board a lump of ambergris that weighs three hundred pounds, and it’s well formed, too.”

“What good luck! I never saw a piece of ambergris in my life.”

How often one man’s good fortune is another man’s discouragement! The visiting captain didn’t feel like remaining any longer. He took our letters, exchanged courtesies, and departed. I watched the two boats as they put back to and reached their ship, and then, as the breach between the two vessels widened, I was conscious of the recurrence of the feeling I had experienced when the *Seabird* dropped from her moorings in New Bedford harbor. The *Magic* diminished until it was only a speck. Then I thought, “In a few months she will drop anchor in the home port, and a large number of the officers and crew will be once more with family or friends. Long months must elapse before our return, and then there are the uncertainties of our calling — disasters or a broken voyage. Oh! for my father’s kindly greeting, my mother’s smile, and the little room which I abandoned for the sea.”

## CHAPTER IX

### HONOLULU AND OFF TO THE ARCTIC

We were due in the Arctic Ocean the last of June, and were to touch first at Honolulu, where most of us expected letters from home. It was not our fortune to take a right whale during the voyage, as we were to cruise partly for sperm whales, but chiefly for the right whale's great brother, the bowhead, to be found in the Northern Pacific and the Arctic Oceans. We were privileged, however, to see a right whale feed. One day we passed through a great stretch of "brit." The sea presented the appearance of an extensive field of grain. I was at the masthead. Another lookout declared, "Plenty of brit. Likely to see a right whale any time. If you do, no use to try and take him. Never take a righter when he's feedin'. One thing, he won't stop, and another thing, he goes too fast for you to follow him."

In half an hour this very man called out, "B-l-o-w-s, b-l-o-w-s, b-l-o-w-s."

"Sperm or righter," shouted the captain.

"Righter," was the answer.

There was no excitement below, indeed nothing to show that a boat was to be lowered. To me the sight was new and interesting. The spout was straight and erect and far more beautiful than that of the sperm. The whale seemed to be bound directly for us and, as we were going in opposite directions, it was not long before he passed at close quarters. The rushing of the great creature with open mouth through his pasture of brit reminded me of a snowplough passing through a drift. He left behind him a trail of blue water and spouted with great force. I did not have to be told again that the right whale was difficult to capture when feeding.

We cruised slowly towards Honolulu, taking a couple of small whales on the way, and, when we arrived, we had four hundred barrels of sperm oil stowed down.

I was of the opinion that some of the men might desert, if they had shore leave. I felt that the temptation would be very strong for

Ohoo, for he would be near his home and he did not regard the cold weather in the Arctic with favor.

The entrance of the harbor is through a narrow opening in the coral reef, and the place where we dropped anchor was at a convenient distance from the shore. A boat's crew was selected, the captain held the steering oar, and Lakeum was in the bow. Strange to say, Ohoo was one of the other four, and I rejoiced in the fact that I also was of the number. An hour's leave was granted. The air was balmy, and the town had rather an American appearance. But delightful as it was to get back once more to civilization, I kept thinking of my mother and my home, and I soon strolled back to the landing. Lakeum, too, had returned, and we were alone. I don't know how he happened to divine my thoughts, but he did.

"Bleechly," he said, "you think Ohoo won't come back, but he will. I'd trust that Kanaka anywhere. His people live up in the town somewhere. They are of the poorer class. Despite persuasion of family or friends, Ohoo will show up in a few minutes."

Soon he resumed:



“ This place is almost as fine and beautiful as Tahiti, and many a whaler has touched here. In the early days both men and women would swim six or seven miles out to the incoming vessels. Things could be bought here cheap then, but the more civilized people become, the dearer everything is. The captain is bargaining for beef and pork, and it will be brought out in a native boat, a kind of lighter, this afternoon.”

Again he ceased talking, looked thoughtful and sad, and then resumed:

“ You are thinking of home, Bleechly, — your mother, no doubt. When you get your letter, I hope you’ll find that all is well. There are many beautiful sayings like ‘ A man’s best friend is his mother ’ and ‘ There is no place like home.’ But what shall we say of a man who has no mother and no home but a whaler? ”

He stopped abruptly and there was something in his face which led me to think that he didn’t want the question answered, and certainly it was plain that he did not propose to answer it himself.

Ohoo appeared and broke forth, “ Oh! Me



so happy — my home, my home! — Me find my folk — no dead, all live! Look at sea. Me swim in him all round when me a boy. All my home.”

Strange that Ohoo should touch with such joy on the subject which Lakeum had just dismissed with such a mournful air. I felt that the mate's eyes were gathering dew and I fixed my gaze on the *Seabird* at her anchorage. The rest of the crew came back, the captain last. In his hand were just a few letters. Recalling Lakeum's words, I thought how true it was that the only home of most of our men was the dirty and dingy fore-castle, and that they were to receive no remembrances from the land they had left.

Captain Gamans was generally more inclined to be austere than sentimental. However, there was a touch of tenderness in what he said when he handed me a couple of letters.

“Lucky you are, boy, to get them. Lucky that you had a home to come from and lucky you'll be if you get back to it. I've no fault to find with you so far; and, if you keep on, you may get a captain's berth, and I hope you will. But if I had my life over, I would stop

with the first voyage and go to work on shore, even if I couldn't get anything to do but shoveling dirt."

Pointing to a vessel anchored near by, the captain continued, "There's a lot of disaster and misfortune in whaling. I've just learned about that ship. Almost no oil, crew deserted, big drafts. That's what they call a broken voyage! Lucky are we with our ambergris."

We had now been gone nearly a year from New Bedford, and the prevailing thought with me was that some sorrow might have visited my distant home. I opened my mother's letter with trembling hands; and it was a mother's letter, just such a one as a mother writes to her son. All were well, there had been no sickness, she had remembered me in her prayers, she had all confidence in the correctness of my habits, she hoped that I was in excellent health, home was not home without me, it seemed many years since my departure, and only my return would restore her happiness.

I opened my father's letter without foreboding, for my mother had told me that all was well. It was a father's letter, just such a

letter as a father writes to his son. He hoped that I was diligent and dutiful as a sailor, that my habits were correct, that I was in good health and that I would have little from the slop chest, as they had given me an outfit which cost a good deal of money. He declared that, if people saved when they were young, they would keep on saving during life, that he wanted me so to conduct myself that there would be something coming to me at the end of the voyage, and, if there was, that he wouldn't claim it, although I was a minor, but would allow me to deposit it in the savings bank in my own name.

After receiving our recruits in the afternoon, we weighed anchor and set sail for the north. The old whaling habit of cruising slowly and shortening sail at night was now abandoned. We crowded on sail and made for the Arctic with all possible speed. As we approached the Aleutian Islands, the weather grew colder, and the men began to look to the slop chest. I noticed that Ohoo called for the warmest outfit, and the poor fellow needed it.

And now a few words about bowheads. It wasn't until 1843 that whalers began to

know anything about these whales. Indeed, before that time, they were ignorant that the right whale had this great brother. Their haunts were in the North Pacific and in the Arctic Sea. In the year named, a whaler for the first time visited the Okhotsk Sea and found and captured bowheads. Soon after they were discovered and taken off Alaska on what was called the Kodiak ground; and in 1847 a whaler named the *Superior* entered Bering Strait. It was learned that, during the severe winter weather, these whales largely visited these two grounds in the North Pacific and then in June and July, as the lower Arctic became more or less free from ice, passed through Bering Strait for their summer sojourn. As more and more whalers visited the North Atlantic and the Arctic, the bowheads became more shy and went farther north. The whalers which pursued them were thus drawn into places where there was great danger from ice; and eleven years from the time of our story came the great disaster which even now bears the name of "Whalers Crushed by Ice."

When we reached Bering Strait there was



no longer any night. It is often said that it was at midnight when the first bowhead was taken in the Arctic. How can this be when, at the time we call midnight, it was daylight?

Several of the crew declared that we should now hear the singing whales, and I was anxious for an explanation. I could hardly believe what they told me when they said that bowheads communicate with one another by emitting sounds resembling singing. This is thought to be a signal, when passing through Bering Strait, to notify other whales that they are bound north and that the Strait is clear of ice. There is another explanation of this musical exercise. When a bowhead is struck, other bowheads in the neighborhood are frightened or "gallied", and the singing is thought to be a signal of danger. I noticed that the cry was something like the hoo-oo-oo of the hoot owl, although longer drawn out and more of a humming sound than a hoot.

I had read about the "killers" and of their fierce attacks upon right whales and bowheads, and assumed, as these battles were rarely witnessed, that I might sail the seas for a life time without ever beholding one. And yet



the spectacle was presented soon after we passed the Strait. The "killer," also called the orca or thresher, is a small whale with a complete set of teeth on both jaws. He isn't worth anything, and hence is never pursued by man. His favorite victim is the bowhead and what he is after is the bowhead's tongue. Now it is to be noted that the tongue of a large bowhead is said to weigh as much as a good many oxen. These killers are as cunning and intelligent as they are cruel. Sometimes a pack of them will engage in the attack on a whale, but frequently only three. In our case we saw ahead of us a great splashing of water and an object that would leap up into the air and disappear, and then reappear and repeat the performance. When we got nearer we saw that a fight was going on between a huge bowhead and three killers. The object we had seen was a killer which again and again sprang into the air and descended on the whale's back with the design apparently of tiring him out. Then we noticed that two creatures had fastened their teeth to the whale's lips with the purpose of forcing his mouth open. There are few things in the world so powerful as the

flukes of a bowhead. The old saying was to beware of a sperm whale's jaw and a right whale's or bowhead's flukes. This unfortunate leviathan was pounding the sea with his great flukes, but not to the injury of his assailants, for they were well out of the way. The flukes were now less active. Soon they ceased to operate; the exhausted bowhead opened his mouth, and the ravenous trio proceeded to feast upon his tongue.

We were now near the whale and, just as a boat was lowered, Kreelman said to me, "That poor fellow is about gone, and it'll be an easy job to kill him. See the shape of him; he ain't so long as a sperm, but he's bigger round and plumper, has thicker and richer blubber and makes more oil, even if it don't bring so much. But let me tell you this, Fancy Chest, them killers don't fool much with sperm whales. A sailor told me once of a sight he see. He said two killers and a swordfish tackled a big bull sperm. The killers come on in front and went for the bull's jaw, and the swordfish come up from below to go for the bull with his sword. He said the bull grabbed one of them killers and made

mince meat of him and the other left. One prick of the sword was all the whale needed. He rushed ahead a little and then brought them flukes of his down with tremendous force, and there wasn't no part of the swordfish left. Better let a sperm whale alone."

When the boat reached the bowhead, he was nearly dead, and it was an easy matter to despatch him and tow him to the ship. The cutting-in and trying-out were nearly the same as in the case of the sperm whale. The only difference was in handling the head. The great strips of bone were cut out, hoisted on deck, carefully cleaned and stowed away. When the carcass was set adrift, there were no ravenous sharks or noisy birds to be seen; and I thought how much more fitting it would have been, if the great creature had met death in a battle with man rather than fall an ignoble prey to the assaults of what are called the "wolves of the sea."

Epicures prefer fish just out of the water. I wonder what they would say of meat just out of the water. There is nothing to show that the meat of sperm whales was ever served to the men, but that of the bowhead was a

common article of food. Of this I was ignorant until Kreelman told me and he added, "We'll have somethin' for supper that'll make your mouth water. Generally the cabin gets the best, the steerage next and the forecastle the scrapings. But the poor old bowhead has so much meat that all will be treated alike."

I had a chat with my old friend, the cook. He told me that the best cuts come from alongside the backbone or the afterpart of the whale, that the flesh looks more like beef liver smeared with blood than any other kind of meat, and that the usual method of cooking the flesh is in meat balls, although stews and steaks are very good. The cook went to the place where the chunks were suspended under the boathouse and came back with one.

"Now watch me, Fancy Chest," he said.

The cook put the meat through a sausage machine, spiced it with sage, savory and pepper, mixed in a little chopped pork, then made it up into balls and fried it. Most of us of the forecastle had never tasted bowhead meat before, but we were loud in our praise of the meat balls. The flavor was rather peculiar, and one of the men, who had seen a good deal



of the world, said that they tasted to him a little like venison.

“Me don’t know nothin’ ’bout Benny’s son,” observed Ohoo. “But me no care no more ’bout lobsouse and hard bread; me eat blawhead all time.”

I have described a right whale feeding on brit. More than once it was our fortune to see a big bowhead devour his dinner. The food in the North Atlantic and Arctic is called “slicks”, which give the water the appearance of oily streaks. They are produced by different kinds of jellyfish and range in size from a pea to six inches or more in diameter. When the bowhead is feeding the spread of the lips is about thirty feet. Turning on his side, he will take a course fifteen feet wide and a quarter of a mile long, scooping just under the surface where the slicks are most abundant. The water passes through the whalebone and packs the slicks upon the hair sieve. The bowhead raises the lower jaw and, still keeping the lips apart, forces the tongue into the cavity of the sieve, expelling the water through the spaces between the bone. Then the bowhead closes his lips to enjoy his meal.



## CHAPTER X

### EXPERIENCES IN THE ARCTIC

Business was now carried on both day and night, or, more properly speaking, all the time, as there was no night. There was always some one in the crow's nest. To increase the chances of seeing and capturing whales, the *Seabird* would drop a boat at about seven A.M., and sail about twenty miles and then drop another boat. Then she would cruise between the two boats. There was little danger, where it was light all the time, of losing a craft. The boats were well provisioned, and the men wore their thickest clothing. On the third day a whale was announced just as the captain gave orders to lower. Our boat and Silva's engaged in sharp competition. We took water first and got the lead, but the movements of the whale favored the other boat, and Silva's man put two irons into him. We stood by to help if we were needed, and I

eagerly watched the proceedings, for this was the first real live bowhead I had seen struck. He pounded the sea with his terrible flukes and then sounded just like a sperm whale. When the slack was taken in and the big fellow appeared on the surface, we followed Silva's boat and watched with keen interest the last act in the tragedy. Silva handled the lance well, driving it into the body as if he had a sperm whale to deal with. When the bowhead was dead and the tow-line was attached to him, Lakeum said to me :

“I hope Silva won't have trouble. You know what so often happens in the case of bowheads?”

“No,” I replied.

“Why, they sink.”

“I didn't know that, Mr. Lakeum. None of our men ever told me.”

“Yes, they sink, just as so many right whales do. That monster there is worth seven thousand dollars, good, and it would be a pity to lose him.”

The words were hardly uttered when Lakeum shouted, “Don't look right, Silva; settling a little.” There was apprehension,

indeed consternation, in the boats. It was true that the whale was settling. When men don't know what to do, they often shout, and this is what the men in Silva's boat did, and when the order came to cut the tow-line, they shouted still louder. Then, as the great whale disappeared, the noise subsided, and as both boats pulled for the vessel, Silva was the picture of despair. The captain had witnessed the unfortunate accident from the ship and was inclined to blame Silva.

"Well, I killed the whale, didn't I, Captain?"

"Yes."

"Am I to blame then, if he sunk?"

There was no answer to this question. The captain muttered, "I don't see why so many of these bowheads sink."

Since passing Bering Strait we had seen several ships in the distance, but they were not near enough to hail. And now a vessel was bearing down on us — presumably not for a gam but for information. She proved to be the *Awashonks*, a vessel with a remarkable history. I was standing near the gangway when her captain boarded us. The *Awashonks*

was three years from home, and the captain was anxious for the latest news. There was little for Captain Gamans to communicate, so the conversation, which was necessarily brief, related to their respective voyages.

“We have just lost a whale,” said our captain. “He sank. I suppose you’ve had bowheads sink, haven’t you?”

“Not on this voyage,” replied the visitor. “I learned the trick on the last voyage. Every bowhead we kill we cut-in, try-out and stow down, never lose one. If whalemens had learned the trick years ago, there wouldn’t be so many bowheads at the bottom of the ocean.”

The visiting captain evidently had information to convey, but didn’t want to give it voluntarily. It seemed to me that he wanted Captain Gamans to ask for it. There was a pause. Then our captain said:

“I suppose sinking is due to the condition of the whale. I don’t suppose lancing has anything to do with it.”

“Lancing has everything to do with it. That’s where the trick comes in. You lance a bowhead or a right whale over the shoulder blade, directing the lance downward, and it



will kill him in the shortest time, but he'll be pretty sure to sink, because there'll be a rushing escape of air, shown in large bubbles rising through the water. Lance him straight or a little upwards and it'll take more time to kill him and be more dangerous, but you'll save your property."

The visitor assumed a triumphant air. I never saw Captain Gamans play his part better. He expressed his thanks for the information and then said, in an off-hand way:

"I suppose that the whale we lost was worth several thousand dollars and that's a good deal of money for any ship that has to depend solely on whaling; but we are not worrying on the *Seabird*. We've packed something away that's worth at least seven bowheads like the one we've lost."

"And what's that?"

"Why nothing but a seventy-thousand-dollar lump of perfectly made ambergris."

The tables were turned. The man who had rejoiced in his triumph was now plainly annoyed. He manifested little interest in the ambergris and soon took his departure.

To me the *Arwashonks* was a vessel of great



interest. A number of ships which cruised in early days in the Pacific Ocean were never heard from, and one opinion was that they were captured by savages. This was nearly the fate of this very *Awashonks*. In October, 1835, she touched at Namovik Island, of the Marshall group, in the Pacific Ocean. The natives who boarded the vessel appeared to be friendly. Suddenly, however, they seized the spades used for cutting in blubber, and attacked the crew. The captain was beheaded and the man at the wheel and the second mate were killed. Before Jones, the third mate, could use a spade he had snatched from a native, he was compelled to flee down the fore-hatch, and the rest of the crew either took to the rigging or found refuge in the hold. The men aloft cut away the running rigging to prevent the progress of the ship; those below worked aft and, with muskets found in the cabin, opened fire, but with little effect, as the natives sought places that were not within range. Some of them gathered above the companionway, which they had closed; Jones placed an open cannister of powder underneath and fired it. The explosion tore off the

roof of the cabin and scattered the natives. Jones and his men then drove them overboard.

Twenty-five years had elapsed since this startling adventure; the *Awashonks* was still afloat and as a fact was to sail the seas for nearly a dozen years more, only to be crushed by ice in the Arctic. What was the age of whalers? Many a one was from time to time repaired and practically made over. It is authentic that one vessel was in commission for eighty-eight years and another for ninety-one.

The logbooks of whalers are of great value in preserving much of the history of whaling which cannot be gleaned from any other source. Logs kept on merchant ships recorded formal matters, such as the weather, the direction of the wind, the location of the vessel, the courses taken and the distances covered. The logs of the whalers contained all these matters and, in addition, accounts of the whales attacked and captured, the bone taken, the oil stowed down, strange occurrences on the deep, such as battles with whales and deliverances from death, the places visited, the happenings on ship and on shore, items of a

personal nature, sums in arithmetic, attempts at poetry, pictures of the whales captured or lost, pen-and-ink -sketches and often colored drawings, and illustrations representing scenes in the life of the whaleman.

The pictures of the whales alluded to were sometimes drawn with a pen, but generally were impressed by means of a stamp, which in early years was carved from wood by the men, and was later made of rubber. The impression was made on the margin of the page, and, if the whale were captured and boiled down, the number of barrels of oil obtained was written on a little white spot purposely left at about the middle of the picture. In running down the margins of the pages, one could easily determine how many whales were taken, how many escaped and the amount of oil each whale yielded. Black ink was not always used. Occasionally the impression was in blue, and the whale's last agony was shown by a scarlet stream pouring from his blowhole. Open the logbook of an old merchant ship and there is nothing to interest, amuse or instruct, but the logs of the old whalers, now in the possession of the New Bedford Public Library

and of the Dartmouth Historical Society, are as interesting as story books, and are, indeed, story books themselves. If the log book of the *Seabird* was deposited in one of these repositories, one will find this entry made by Lakeum after the capture of the cachalot which yielded the ambergris—"This day we took a golden whale."

One would think that it was the duty of the first mate to keep the logbook, but on a whaler others were permitted to ventilate on its pages their joys or woes. One of the most amusing entries was the following, made by the steward of the *Mystic*, sent on a cruise for sea-elephant oil in 1843.

How dear to this heart are the scenes of past days,  
When fond recollection recalls them to mind,  
The schooner so taut and so trim like a miss in her stays,  
And her light rigging which swayed to the wind —  
The old-fashioned galley, the try-works close by it,  
The old blubber-boat with six oars to pull it.  
The bunk of my messmate, the wooden chest nigh it,  
The old monkey jacket, the often-patched jacket,  
The greasy old jacket which hung up beside it.

There are few logbooks which give accounts of mutinies for the reason that, when the mutineers got possession of a vessel, the logbook



went overboard. An exception is that of the *Barclay*, which sailed from New Bedford in 1843. The logbook records that trouble began soon after sailing; that a fight for the third time occurred at supper between one of the crew and the green hands; that the fighter was put in the rigging and given a few stripes; that he acknowledged the blame and was released; that he went forward, making threats; that the blacksmith was very saucy, he being the worse for rum; that for days the weather was so severe and the sea so rough that no entries were made and no observations taken; that after rounding the Horn the weather was much better; that on Monday, April 29, 1845, at eight o'clock, the captain sent the steward forward to call the men, or one of the men, aft, to see their meat weighed; that they wouldn't come; that the captain called them three times and then took a broom to one of the blacks; that they refused, one of them saying that one of their complaints was that a pound and a quarter of meat was not enough; that they now went forward; that the black was insolent and was told to go aft again, that he replied that he would not and



went to the fore-castle, that in getting him up one of the men interfered and struck the captain; that the captain dropped his weapon and took hold of him; that the man seized the weapon and attempted to strike the captain; that he was told to go aft but refused, and went down into the fore-castle, and, taking a sheath knife, said he would kill the first man who came down there, but that at last he delivered himself up to be put in irons. "Thus ends in Peace." The mutiny collapsed, otherwise the logbook would have been delivered to the sea.

During the voyage I had made many entries in the logbook under the direction of Lakeum, and now I was to be intrusted with further authority. Lakeum observed:

"Bleechly, I'm going to let you keep the log now. You'd better first tell me what entries you are going to make, and after you've made them I'll look them over in a general way to see that they are all right. I don't know as you are given to poetry and such things. If you are I wouldn't put any of your rhymes on the logbook. There is too much scribbling on some of them."

Lakeum laughed heartily, the first sign of merriment on his part I had for a long time seen. However, I had a little artistic taste, and I proposed to indulge it. In a few days I had my first entry to make other than the usual formal matters, and here it is:

Remarks on Board of the *Seabird*, Captain Gamans. In the Arctic Ocean.

Thursday, July 7, 1860.

First part light breezes from S. W. Middle part much the same. At 2 p. m. saw whales and put off. Boats among whales. One whale being towed to ship.

The imprints tell the story, — one whale making sixty barrels, and underneath the words, No. 12; another whale without any accompanying figures and the imprints of several flukes, above one of which was the word “missed”, and under another the words, “Drew the Iron.” Thus one whale was captured, the iron missed a second and drew out of a third. Such a method of description reminds one of the picture-writing of savages.

Of course there was surmise as to who would sight the largest bowhead which was

captured. I think there was a general feeling that the gold watch ought to go to the Gay Head Indian. He had, so far, sighted more whales than any man on the ship. It was generally thought that the other prize would go to me, although it was possible that a sperm whale larger than the one I had announced might be captured. One of the men reasoned, "Fancy Chest didn't really sight the whale; the whale sighted him. He happened to come up near the ship, and such luck might have happened to anyone. Now the Gay Header has got the best eyes of any man on board. Those Gay Head Indians have made the best mastheaders on the New Bedford whalers for years. But just as likely as not luck will be against the man, and some greenie will get the prize."

I answered, "You forget that there are two more seasons yet — one sperm whaling and another again north. As for myself, I wouldn't object to the watch, but I'm not catching unhatched chickens. I don't know as I would like anything better than for Ohoo to get the watch."

Our life in the Arctic was not so bad. Not

compelled to cruise far north, as vessels were in later years, we encountered little ice and the weather was generally fair. We were successful, and the hardships we had to endure were not so severe as we had anticipated. One day from the lips of the Gay Header came the happy call. The boats were lowered and in a few hours the largest bowhead yet was fast to the *Seabird*. The Gay Header was well liked, and his supposed good fortune gave great satisfaction. During the cutting-in and trying-out there was much conjecture as to the monster's yield, and it was remarkable how accurate were the estimates of the men who for years had followed the sea.

Here is the entry which I made in the log-book:

Remarks on Board the *Seabird*. In the Arctic Ocean.

Tuesday, August 17, 1860.

These twenty-four hours commenced with a light air. Cloudy from the southward and westward. At 3 p. m. Gay Header sighted whale and boats lowered, and at 7 fast to whale, 3 miles from ship. Took whale alongside at 11. All hands sent below. At 7 called all hands and commenced cutting-in.



And what were the imprints in the white spot in the black whale on the margin?

“L. B. B. 163 barrels No. 16.”

Four days later one of the men sighted another whale and when he was alongside it was noted that he was of great size. Would he prove larger than the Gay Header's whale? That was the question. Comment and guessing went on for several days while the toilful labor was pursued. Towards the last of the trying-out and stowing down the excitement rose to a high pitch, and the announcements were eagerly received. As we were nearing the end 161 barrels was called out, then fifteen gallons more. The amount was increased ten gallons, then the last of it made six gallons more. A shout went up, “A half a gallon short of 162, but call it 162”, and the Gay Header was one barrel ahead. We had now, besides the sperm oil, ten hundred and fifty barrels of whale oil in the hold and twelve thousand pounds of whalebone, not to mention the ambergris.

I had written at school very modest verses, lauded by my schoolmates as very fine poetry,



and I now composed a crude stanza which I wanted to put in the logbook. With some hesitation and diffidence, I went to Lakeum and stated my request.

“I thought I told you, Bleechly, that we didn’t want any scribbling on the log.”

“Well,” I replied, “they’ve made some fun of me because they say that my sighting the big sperm was only a matter of luck, and I want to show to whom I would like to have the watch go, if a still larger whale than mine is captured.”

“Well, show me the lines.”

I have spoken of Lakeum laughing heartily. He repeated the exercise.

“Put it in if you want to. I think, however, you’ll make more money whaling than you will writing poetry.”

I made the following entry:

They call me simply Fancy Chest,  
And say within my grasp  
The prize that every tar desires  
It may be mine to clasp.

But, if a man of keener sight  
A greater whale may claim,  
I choose a man of royal worth  
And Ohoo is his name.

Some of the crew asked me to repeat the lines. I noticed that they seemed to make an impression only upon Ohoo. He wanted to know if I was writing about something good to eat.

During our stay in the Arctic we did not once make a landing. Several times, in running in near the shore of Alaska, the Esquimos came out to us in their boats and we hove to for a few minutes to allow them to come on board. I noticed how skilfully they handled their canoes, which were made of the skin of some animal, probably the seal. The paddles were double-bladed, and very gracefully the oarsmen shifted the blades, sending the boats ahead with remarkable speed. The Esquimos had picked up a little English and their patois was curious and not always intelligible. For bits of rope, old hoops and so forth they traded knickknacks of their own making. For an old shirt, I purchased several of these articles which I proposed to carry home as mementos. About the middle of September, just as we were about to sail for Honolulu, we ran near shore for the last time, and just as we tacked several of their boats appeared. The season

was over and they seemed to know that they would see us no more, for as we bore away, the occupants called out in cheery tones, "Goo'by — goo'by."

## CHAPTER XI

### HONOLULU AGAIN, AND SEA TALES

And now for Honolulu! Every one was good-natured and happy. Few vessels in the history of whaling could beat our record of fifteen months. It was the opinion that if our good fortune continued, the voyage would not exceed three years. There were no orders to shorten sail nights. We were to make port in the shortest possible time in order to ship all our oil for New Bedford, and prepare for our cruise on the Coast of Japan. Lakeum said to me one day:

“You remember that when we stopped at Honolulu we had rather a picked crew when we went ashore. That was more a happen-so than anything else. I suppose you thought that men who were thought not likely to desert were selected, and I remember that I said something to you about Ohoo’s faithfulness. You see at that time we had four hundred sperm and the ambergris. That was enough

to keep the men loyal. Now we have ten hundred and fifty whale and twelve thousand pounds of bone more. Do you suppose men with a lot of money in view are going to desert? I think not. We shall be at Honolulu some time, but you may be sure that every man will turn up when we sail."

We reached Honolulu in due season and discharged all our cargo, except the ambergris. The foremast hands saw every nook and corner of the beautiful town, which was peculiar in having both a tropical and an American air. The bathing was delightful, and its charm was only surpassed by watching from the shore the natives as they glided on the surface of the sea like tiny seaboats or dove with the ease and grace of the seafowl. Ohoo took me to his home, a rude little cottage with few of the modern conveniences, but the home of kind and pleasant people. His father was dead, but his mother, two sisters and a brother were my entertainers. I ate their simple and to me rather curious food, but was particularly pleased with the fish which was cooked between heated stones. They danced and sang their quaint songs, and I truly felt that I was



in another world. Ohoo acted as interpreter, and the funny work he made of it promoted mirth and hilarity. I bade my new-made friends good-by, feeling that this brief experience was one of the most delightful episodes of the voyage.

Our cargo discharged, and recruits taken aboard, we started for the coast of Japan on November 24, 1860. Whales were, and still are, plentiful in those waters, the first vessels to visit which were the *Syren* and *Maro* of Nantucket in 1820. Our cruise was to be a long one, and then we were to go north again.

Of all the adventures of whalers, none exceeds in daring and danger that of Ronald MacDonald, all the more remarkable because the daring was unnecessary and the danger voluntarily incurred. In 1826 the ship *Lady Adams* disappeared near the coast of Japan, and it was surmised that she had struck a reef and that her crew, after reaching shore, had been murdered. Another vessel, named the *Lawrence*, was wrecked, and it was afterward learned that the second mate and seven of the crew, after landing, had been cruelly treated, one of the number having been tortured to

death. It also appeared that the crew of another vessel, which stranded on the coast, received similar treatment, one of the men killing himself to escape further torment.

While whalemens regarded the Japanese coast with terror, yet one day, when a whaler was cruising near that coast, MacDonald, a seaman, obtained his discharge, taking in lieu of his "lay" a boat equipped for landing and supplied with sundry books and certain utensils, and boldly made for shore. On his arrival he was stripped of everything, but, as it appeared to his captors that his outfit indicated good intentions, they did not torture him; so he began to teach them English.

Some time afterward Commodore Biddle visited Yeddo for the purpose of establishing trade relations with the Japanese. MacDonald and the survivors of the two wrecked whale ships were committed to the Commodore's charge with the warning never to return. The stories told by these whalemens, and the information gained by Biddle, determined our government to send another expedition under Commodore Perry, with results so well known to the world.

In the dogwatch the *Lady Adams*, the *Lawrence* and Ronald MacDonald were much talked about. A couple of our men had sailed in vessels that had cruised within a few years off the coast of Japan, but they said they had never known a boat to land on the coast, and so far as they knew a few whalers only had recruited at Hakodate, a port to which vessels might go. There was something mysterious about the quarter of the world we were approaching, and the uncertainty colored our conversation in the dogwatch. Shipwrecks and other disasters at sea were also brought up, and the more terrible the tales, the greater the interest.

“Suppose anything happened to us off the coast of Japan. What should we do?” said one of the men.

“It might be another case like the *Essex*,” replied Kreelman.

There was a demand for the tale of the *Essex*. While I had read all about that ill-fated vessel, I was anxious to hear Kreelman’s version.

“In the year 1820,” he began, “the ship *Essex* of Nantucket, Captain Pollard, was

cruisin' in this very Pacific Ocean when whales was sighted. The first whale they struck stove the boat. Two other boats was soon fast to another whale, and the ship headed towards them. All of a sudden a big sperm bull breached nearby and bore down on the ship at full speed and struck her with tremendous force and she begun to sink. The whale moved off, and then he come back, openin' and closin' his big jaws and poundin' the sea with his flukes and dashed into her again; and pretty soon she was on her beam ends. Owen Chase, the mate of the *Essex*, writ a book in which he said that there wasn't no such thing as chance about it, that the whale was mad because they had struck his companions and that he meant revenge. In three boats captain, officers and crew made for Peru, which was nearly three thousand miles away. They at first reached an island where nobody lived, and three of them preferred to die there rather than go through what the men would have to go through who were to go on in the open boats. One boat was never heard from. When one of them gave up and died the others



ate his raw flesh like wolves. At last they were rescued. Three in one boat was picked up by one ship, and two in the other boat by another ship. Captain Pollard was one of the men that was saved. Word got round to Nantucket, before his return, of the awful time he and his shipmates had had, and when he come back the streets was lined with people, and not a word was said as he walked with bowed head to his home."

Kreelman's tale was correct. Some one said, "Fancy Chest, you are a scholar and have read about such things. You can't tell no tale that can beat that."

"I don't want to," I declared. "The story of the *Essex* is all true and I trust it may never be repeated; but I can tell a story of a whale as savage as the one which sank the *Essex*. He too attacked a whaler, but no lives were lost."

"Go on," they shouted.

"In 1850 the *Parker Cook* of Provincetown, while cruising in the Atlantic, lowered two boats for a bull sperm. The boat-steerer of one of the boats made fast with two irons, and the whale capsized her. The line fouled and nearly severed the boat-steerer's leg from



the body. He fortunately was able to cut the line, and the other boat picked up the men in the water and returned to the ship. But the whale wasn't satisfied. Like the destroyer of the *Essex*, he made for the *Parker Cook* and struck her with great force, throwing the men to the deck and burying the cutwater and stem up to the planking in his head. Then he repeated the performance but with abated force. The captain lowered another boat, and, when they were in close quarters, fired three bomb lances into the creature and so wounded him that he spouted blood. Every time the whale made for the boat, great skill was required in avoiding his charges. The whale was at last killed, and when tried out yielded a little over a hundred barrels. The vessel put into Fayal for medical treatment for the boat-steerer and for repairs. Lucky it was that the attack was directly on the stem. Had it been on any other part of the vessel she would probably have shared the fate of the *Essex*."

The men called for another, and I responded:

"Of course, what I have just told I read out of a book, and, as you ask for another, I'll

give you this which I also read out of a book, but it's true nevertheless. While near the Azores in 1832, the mate's boat of the *Barclay* of Nantucket struck a whale with both irons, and, when the mate went forward to use the lance, the whale turned and killed him and then escaped. A few days after, the *Hector* of New Bedford fell in with the same whale, and several boats were lowered. The whale made for the mate's boat. This officer, by a quick move, avoided the encounter, and the boat-steerer threw his harpoon successfully, but the whale turned and smashed the bow of the boat. He then demolished the captain's boat. While the crew were picked up, the whale proceeded to bite up the pieces of the broken craft, and succeeded with a single exception. This was a keg. As the keg bobbed up and down on the waves, the whale tried to capture it with his teeth, but unsuccessfully, and he seemed very angry. After the men had reached the ship, the whale and the keg were still in evidence. The mate now picked a crew and lowered again. The whale then lost interest in the keg and made for the boat. Its occupants, terror-stricken, pulled

for the ship. Several times they barely escaped from the whale's jaws, and they were becoming exhausted when the whale, which had been fighting of course with his belly up, turned over to lift his head out of water and take in some fresh air. The boat was so near that the mate was able to drive his lance into the creature's vitals, killing him almost instantly. The harpoons of the *Barclay* were found in his body."

The men were very attentive and thoughtful. One of them said, "If a boat's crew should lose the ship in these waters we're goin' to, it wouldn't do to land, and I don't know what would become of 'em."

Kreelman turned to me and said, "Fancy Chest, that reminds me of the bark *Janet*. I've heard the story, but you've read about it, I suppose. So go on and tell it."

"Yes, I have read about it. In 1849 a boat's crew succeeded in killing a whale, and soon after the boat was capsized. All the contents except the oars were lost. The men were able to right the craft, but she was water-filled, and the sea was so rough that to prevent the boat from foundering the oars were lashed

across her. Night was coming on and, unfortunately, they were not seen from the vessel. Working their way to the dead whale, they made fast to him and endeavored to empty the water from the boat, but the sea was so rough that they were forced to cut loose. After a night of great suffering they looked in vain for the bark. They could make little headway, and they were all exhausted, so they put the boat before the wind. On the second day the sea subsided, and they were encouraged to throw over the boat and empty the water. One man was lost in the unsuccessful endeavor, and two of the men soon went mad. The nearest land was an island off the coast of Peru, a thousand miles away. The weak and discouraged crew summoned all their strength and tore the ceiling from the boat, with which to rig a wooden sail. They steered their course at night by the stars, and by day suffered great agony from the heat. There was neither food nor water for seven days, and then they drew lots, and one of their number was killed and eaten. A shower fell, but too late. On the eighth day another man died and on the ninth another shower furnished water.



Then a dolphin leaped into the boat. For several days birds came so near that the men were able to kill them. Twenty days after the boat capsized they reached the island off Peru. There they killed a wild pig and two days later were taken off by the *Leonidas* of New Bedford."

"Well," observed one of the men, repeating the previous remark, "if a boat gets lost from a ship on the ground we are goin' to, they'd have a hard time of it. It wouldn't do to land there, and where could they land?"

This observation gave rise to discussion, and the expression of views showed a woful ignorance of geography. Kreelman seemed to have the best grasp of the situation.

"Gentlemen," he said, "this coast of Japan ground, as they call it, stretches over an awful distance. It runs clear down pretty near to the Caroline Islands. That's south, and I shouldn't be surprised if we touched there for supplies before we go north again. A man who cruised in this ocean and was once on this ground told me all about it."

"There ain't no danger from savages round here, is there?" asked one of the men.



“No danger in these days,” replied Kreelman. “In old days occasionally a whaler in this ocean was never heard from. Some thought shipwreck, some thought cuttlefish and some thought savages. I don’t know. I don’t believe there will ever be again such a case as the *Sharon’s*. That was twenty years ago. One of the men who was on board told me about it years ago.”

The sea was quite tranquil, we were sailing freely and there was silence. I knew that all Kreelman wanted was encouragement.

“I have heard of that case,” I observed. “It was in 1842.”

“How do you know?”

“Oh, I’ve read about it.”

“Well, readin’ ain’t always knowin’. When you hear a thing from a man who’s been there it’s first hand, and, when you get it out of a book, it’s second hand.”

“Well,” I observed, “you had no objection, not long ago, to listen to stories I took from books.”

Kreelman made no reply and on his own invitation told the story in his quaint way.

“Well, you see, this *Sharon* touched at an

island where a number of the crew deserted, and she put to sea with only seventeen men all told. One day two boats were lowered for whales, and the captain, a Portuguese boy and three natives of the Kingsmill group of islands was left on board. They took a whale and the ship bore down and took him alongside, and then they trimmed the sails to prevent her forgin' ahead. The boats were now after other whales.

“Soon the signal flag of the ship at half-mast informed those in the boats that there was trouble on board and they put for the ship. When within hailin' distance the boy, who was in the riggin', called out that the natives had killed the captain and had control of the ship. One of the natives shook a cuttin'-spade at the men in the boats. Then he said some-thin' in his own language to the fourth native who was in one of the boats. They thought that he asked him to jump overboard and swim to the ship, but the man in the boat shook his head. Then the fellow on deck threw the cook's axe and he aimed so good that the man in the boat only saved himself by dodgin' it.

“The mate was afraid that the savages

would swing the yards and that the sails would catch the wind, so he called to the boy in the riggin', 'Cut the halyards of the upper sails on the mainmast and then go forward on a stay and cut 'em on the foremast.' The boy done it, and then the boats got close together and the mates talked over what they'd better do. One said one thing, and another another.

"Benjamin Clough, only nineteen years old, was third mate of the ship. Clough stood up in the bow of the first mate's boat, picked up a lance and hurled it at a savage standin' on the ship's rail, but the warp was too short and the savage laughed at him. Then Clough said that, if the boy would cut loose the fore-royal stay and let it drop into the water from the end of the jib boom, he would swim to the ship with the warp of the lance in his mouth and fight the savages single-handed. The mate said, 'All right,' and they called to the boy, but he was weak from bein' afraid and tired out, and couldn't do it. The ship didn't drift much, and they stayed in the boats till night come on.

"Now this Clough was an awful smart fel-

low and he said once more that he would swim to the ship, and the first mate told him to go ahead. He took off every rag he had on, then he took a boat knife in his teeth, and he didn't care if the sea was full of sharks; he swam straight to the stern of the vessel, climbed up the rudder and got into the cabin through a window. He found, in the dark, two cutlasses and two muskets, which he loaded. A native come down the steps and Clough attacked him with a cutlass and cut out one of his eyes, but in the struggle Clough's right hand was badly cut. The native was as good as killed.

“One of the other two savages come to the head of the stairs with a cuttin' spade in his hand. Clough pointed a musket with his left hand and right forearm and fired it and killed the fellow. As his body come down stairs, bringin' the spade with him, it struck Clough's left arm and cut it badly. And now see what a smart fellow the first mate was. Through the cabin window Clough told him what he had done, and how badly he was hurt, and called for help and said that only one savage was alive. But the brave mate replied that,



as he had only heard one shot, he believed that only one savage was dead, so he wouldn't help Clough. The poor fellow stretched out on the cabin floor helpless. In half an hour the boat came under the stern, and the men climbed in through the windows. The native who hadn't been hurt jumped overboard but came on board again during the night and was put in irons. Clough's wounds healed and, when he got back, his owners made him captain of the *Sharon* and then built a new ship for him."

The men were greatly pleased with Kreelman's story; they were loud in their praises of Clough; and, as foremast hands have generally a pretty low estimate of the upper officers, they expressed their opinion of the first mate in uncomplimentary language. This conference during the dogwatch was the most interesting of any in the whole voyage. Most of my companions had looked forward to this long cruise with some forebodings, and the stories narrated pertained to experiences and incidents which some of them probably felt they might themselves encounter before the season was over. But Kreelman's tale had



thrilled them. What gloom there had been was dissipated, and the men went to the watch below that night all ready for their labors in the months before them.

## CHAPTER XII

### THE COAST OF JAPAN AND THE CAROLINES

One would think from the name "Coast of Japan" that whalers cruised off the land. In truth they cruised generally some distance from it, for, as has been said, sperm whales do not like soundings and are found in deep water. Fortunately we did not experience a typhoon or any violent storm. We saw a few vessels that looked like junks, but they did not come near enough for us to hail them. Of whalers we saw not a few, and we gammed with several of them. During the months we were there we took three hundred and fifty barrels of sperm oil and were about to start for the Caroline Islands, as Kreelman had predicted, when I had the most eventful experience of my life. As I recall it after all these years, I shudder and renew my gratitude for deliverance.

The day before we were to sail for the Carolines, whales were announced in the afternoon,

and Silva's and Lakeum's boats were lowered. The wind was right; so the masts were stepped and the sails set. For heavy whaleboats, built for service and not for speed, we made very good time. Every one was happy, and I fancy that the men in both boats contemplated a good day's work with a couple of whales, at least, fast to the ship.

Silva's boat had the advantage, and within an hour from the time of leaving the ship was fast to a whale. The other whales vanished, so we took in sail and awaited developments. In the meantime the wind had shifted, but we could see the ship in the distance, and she was of course beating towards us. It is difficult to tell what a whale will do under water, and he doesn't propose to let anybody know. When he disappears you may think that he will reappear at some point in the distance and then, of a sudden, he will emerge not far from the place where he sounded. Not a whale was now to be seen; but we were sure that one at least would soon be in evidence, and that was the one that had been struck by the harpooner of Silva's boat. But we lost interest in that leviathan, for suddenly a great

sperm whale rose not more than a hundred feet from our craft. We were ordered to take the paddles, and in less than a minute the bow just touched the big fellow's body. With his left leg in the clumsy cleat and his stalwart figure strongly outlined against the western sky, where the sun was now hardly visible, our boat-steerer threw both harpoons with splendid effect. We were quick to respond to Lakeum's order, but the flukes were very inactive and there were hardly any suds to get out of; and the whale showed no inclination to sound.

"I've been in a boat for thirty years," said one of our men, "and I never see a whale like that before. I believe he's sick, and I shouldn't be surprised if he had five hundred pounds of ambergris in him worth a good deal more than a hundred thousand dollars."

We had pretty quick proof of the fact that the whale was not sick, and we never had the opportunity to learn whether or not he was rich in ambergris. The monster deliberately turned belly up and came for us.

Lakeum yelled, "Up with your oar, Bleechly." That meant, of course, a signal

to the other boat for help. The whale took our boat in his teeth, and all of us, with one exception, jumped into the water. The exception was a quiet, inoffensive man, and an excellent sailor whom we all liked, and who had been friends with every one during the voyage. The whale seized him so that the head and arms alone were to be seen. The poor man uttered a fearful shriek, and there came to his face an expression of anguish and despair. Then he disappeared and the whale proceeded to chew our boat into bits. Five men struggling in the water, and an angry whale likely to devour them at any moment!

The whale was indifferent to the others. He directed his attention to me. I was a good swimmer and my salvation depended on my successfully eluding him, and on my keeping afloat until help arrived. The monster turned over, closed his jaws and came feeling around slowly and carefully. He passed close to me, and, afraid of his flukes, I grasped the warp attached to the harpoons in his body and was towed a short distance. The moment he slacked speed, I dove under, so as to clear the flukes and come up astern of them. Now I



felt rather secure; but strange to say he turned and half breached as he came for me. If he had struck me a full blow, I should have been crushed to pieces. I think the end of his jaw may have just touched my body. At any rate, down I went, and, when I came up, he had turned so that I was able to get hold of the warp again. Now he seemed to be puzzled.

My four companions, all of whom appeared to be good swimmers, were struggling in the water, but he paid no attention to them. He pounded the sea with his flukes and then turned over again. I had to release my grasp and as his great body rolled against me, I was half stunned and half drowned, and consciousness left me. When I came to, it was dark. I felt very sore on the side where the whale had rolled against me, and I was extremely weak.

I muttered, "Where am I? Where am I? Am I dead or alive?"

Assurance came with the voice of Lakeum. "You are all right, Bleechly. Let me tell you the whole story. When the whale turned over, as you were clinging to the warp, he proceeded to bite up what little pieces of the

boat there were left. When you put the oar on end as a signal, Silva ordered his warp cut and gave up his whale in order to save us, and he arrived just in the knick of time. You were taken aboard first, of course, and made as comfortable as possible; then the rest of us were rescued."

"What became of the whale?" I broke in.

"Oh, he made off. It was then growing dark and the ship was not to be seen, but she'll pick us up in the morning."

I was in considerable pain, and the wet clothes increased my discomfort. It was pretty difficult to do much for a sick man in a whale-boat with eleven men in it, but they did for me all they could, and it is remarkable how kind and tender, at such times, rough and unskilled men can be. The long, dreary night at last ended and the sun rose beautifully, but in my condition it made no impression upon me. Not far away was a curious-looking vessel which Lakeum said was a junk, and it seemed to be bearing down on us. I heard them say that our vessel's top-hamper could just be seen. The wind was now favorable, water was thrown on the sail, and the men

took to the oars as well. With this double method of propelling the boat it made pretty good time. I was propped up in a little space at the stern, just where I was clear of the oarsmen, and where I was afforded unrestricted vision.

The junk seemed to be gaining on us. Then it suddenly occurred to me why the men were at the oars and why water was thrown on the sail. Strange to say this apprehended peril didn't disturb me. The interest inspired largely relieved me of suffering. The stranger kept gaining on us and soon I could see men on her deck. Now I turned a little, although the effort was somewhat painful, and noticed that the *Seabird* was not so very far off, as her upper rigging was visible. Lakeum encouraged the men in a low tone, and the situation had the aspect of a race. The junk was a strange-looking object with its lugsails, the first I had ever seen, and its low prow. But while she was gaining on us we were making good time, and, of course, our own ship was approaching, though she was beating to windward. There is much mystery at sea about currents, but there is more mystery about

wind. Sometimes three vessels may be seen, each sailing with a different wind. Suddenly the junk changed her course; the wind was no longer friendly. In less than a quarter of an hour we were alongside the *Seabird*, and, while I was able to walk, I was not fit for duty; so I was allowed to go to my bunk in the dismal fore-castle.

For three days I could not respond to duty and, while I did not receive the modern treatment which one receives from a trained nurse, the carpenter drew supplies from the medicine chest, applied lotions and wound bandages, if not always with a trained hand, yet with good intent, fortified by words of sympathy and cheer. My associates, rough seafaring men, were kind and moved quietly about in our little enclosure, as if to relieve my suffering and contribute to my comfort. Ohoo was particularly thoughtful, asking, in his broken English, "What me do you? Me willin' help all time." And the cook, my old friend, provided from his meager material little dishes that were out of the usual. But constantly there was presented the picture of our old companion in the whale's jaw — he of whom



we all had thought so well, and with whom we had never had a difference — and my heart was filled with gratitude for my preservation and deliverance.

It was a pleasure to get back to work and to feel that we were on our way to the Carolines. It was now March, 1861, and we were due at our destination in May. Nothing eventful occurred during the passage; a few whales were seen and boats were lowered, but in each case the chase was abandoned. We were very happy when we caught the first glimpse of land, for we knew that the stay was to be a pretty long one. While there was much work to be done in overhauling the ship and taking aboard supplies, we were told that there would be a good deal of liberty, as the spot we were to visit was remote from any settlement, and the people with whom we were to deal were natives.

We dropped anchor in a small bay and there, right before us, was the ship *Sunrise* of New Bedford, stripped of boats, sails and so forth, and hove down upon her side, so that the keel was exposed. We soon learned that the ship had sprung a leak, and, as the nearest



civilized port was many miles away, the ship had been beached and, under the direction of the carpenter, the necessary repairs had been made.

I remember what Kreelman said, "Fancy Chest, there's nothin' like whalemen. Merchantmen couldn't do that. Whalemen are jacks at all trades. A whaleship's a little world, and there's nothin' that whalemen can't do." And now, after many long years of rather varied experience, I recall Kreelman's words, and give them my hearty approval.

The first thing to do was to get temporary supplies. So a boat was sent ashore with a little trade, and when it returned it brought vegetables, fruit, fowl and pigs enough to last us for a fortnight or more.

The next day the ship was hauled in near shore and secured with chain cables. By orders of the captain, Lakeum began the overhauling and putting in order. The yards were sent down and the entire rigging was examined and necessary renewals were made. All the blocks were put in order. The masts were stayed, standing rigging was set up, yards were crossed, running rigging was rove, sails

were bent and furled snug, and all the yards squared. All this took, of course, a number of days. After that, general shore leave was announced. The *Sunrise* was now repaired, and about to be hauled out to an anchorage, where she could be refitted with spars, rigging, sails and so forth and refurnished with casks, provisions, movables and the like. Here was work done in these two cases which would have cost the owners a great deal of money had the vessels put into port.

All of us went ashore, and all hands of the *Sunrise* were given liberty at the same time. If the expression may be used, it was a case of gamming on shore. The captains and officers got together, and the crews went off by themselves. The island was one of the smallest of the group. The natives were hospitable and invited us into their little huts, where they set before us fruit, of which there was a great variety and abundance, and their curiously cooked food. The day was faultless and the whole experience most delightful. The men of the two vessels affiliated beautifully. There was no friction. In the late afternoon we all went in swimming, and a luxury it was

to men whose brief opportunity of obtaining a bath on shipboard was afforded by a rainfall, and generally a very poor opportunity, too. Just before separating, all gathered together, and then for the first time the conversation turned to our respective catches. The amount of our oil compared very favorably with that of the *Sunrise*, but our new-made friends were inclined to be boastful and assertive. One of our men said very quietly:

“Oil is a good thing, but, when you have something on board worth more than a thousand barrels of sperm, that’s a little better thing.”

“You ain’t discovered no diamond mine in the ocean, have ye?” asked a *Sunrise* man. His companions roared.

“No,” replied our spokesman; “we didn’t discover no diamond mine. We opened up a gold mine.”

“What d’ye open it up with — a pick-axe?” Another loud laugh.

“No, with a cutting spade; and the man on our ship who has the largest lay is goin’ to see more money than he ever see before, when his voyage is settled. A one-hundred-and-

eightieth lay in seventy thousand dollars worth of ambergris ain't to be sneezed at."

As I recall the experience of that day I now regret that any allusion was made to the ambergris. Its introduction into the conversation seemed to disturb the pleasant relations, and the leave-takings were cold and formal.

Trade negotiations were renewed, and abundant supplies were taken on board. We now learned that we were to proceed to the Okhotsk Sea. Some bowheads remained in these waters during the summer, while many passed out to seek the Arctic Ocean. It was rumored that the captain had had such good luck the first season in the Arctic that he believed it policy to change to another whaling ground. There may have been a bit of superstition in this, but the change proved a good one. Word was passed round that we were going to stand well to the westward and go to the right of the Hawaiian Islands, and this because the captain hoped to sight some whaler bound home, and intrust a letter to her. Day followed day and only one small whale was taken. Finally a speck was seen at the horizon in line of the course we were taking.



As we drew nearer the boats could be seen at the davits, so we knew she was a whaler. Both vessels hove to, one of our boats was lowered, and the captain went in her to visit the stranger. On his return I was near the gangway and heard him say, "The *Hepworth* of New Bedford, bound home."

"Did you tell them about the ambergris?" asked Lakeum.

"No, that's such a tender subject that I thought I'd spare them. But I learned something that was a great surprise. The captain said that they told him, not long ago, in Honolulu, that last November a man named Abraham Lincoln was elected President of the United States."

"Did you ask the captain who Lincoln was?"

"Yes, but he said he didn't know."



## CHAPTER XIII

### WHOSE WHALE WAS IT?

We arrived at the Okhotsk Sea in the early summer; and one has only to visit that inlet to learn how extensive it is. The weather was not so severe as that of the Arctic, and so far as we were concerned we found the whaling equally good. Our captain followed the method he had adopted in the Arctic of dropping a boat, sailing a long distance and dropping another, and then taking a course between them. The bowheads seemed a little more active than those in the Arctic, but, if once struck, there was nothing to fear except their terrible flukes. There was much conjecture as to some probable creature who would yield more oil than the Gay Header's whale, and thus be the means of bestowing the watch on another. One whale, the largest in the Okhotsk, yielded one hundred and fifty-eight barrels and the Gay Header was safe.

In the whaling days there were quarrels over whales, and a few lawsuits, too. Strange that these differences should arise at places thousands of miles distant from Massachusetts, and that the cases should be tried in the United States Court in that State. How could there be any quarrel or lawsuit over a whale lying dead on the surface of the ocean? And the question may be answered by asking another question, "Whose whale was it?" That is, the question was not always who killed the whale but who owned the whale after it was killed.

There was a usage generally observed by whalers that when a whale was struck, and the harpoon, with the line attached, remained in the whale, but the line did not remain fast to the boat, and a boat's crew from another ship continued the pursuit and captured the whale, and the master of the first ship claimed the whale on the spot, the whale belonged to the first ship. At last the matter was taken into the United States Court, and the judge held that the usage was a good one and that the whale belonged to the first ship.

Two lawsuits arose over whales captured

in the Okhotsk Sea. One, as follows: Having killed a bowhead, the first mate of the whaler anchored the whale in five fathoms of water and attached a waif, intending to return the next day. Early in the morning, boats of another New Bedford whaler towed the whale to their ship, where it was cut-in and boiled down. It turned out that the anchor didn't hold in the night, that the cable coiled around the whale's body, and that no waif irons were attached to it. The captain of the vessel whose boat had originally killed the whale visited the other ship and laid claim to the whale; for oil and bone worth five thousand dollars or more were not to be given up without something more than a protest. If the captain of the vessel which had the oil and the bone had yielded, the bone could easily have been then delivered, but to turn over great casks of oil from one vessel to another, in a rough sea, was not so easy. But the captain wouldn't yield. The discussion between the two masters was bitter and boisterous.

"I killed the whale," said the captain of the first vessel.

"Your first mate says he killed it."

“Now don't be smart. You know when I said 'I', the reference was to my ship.”

“Where's the proof that anybody in your ship killed it?”

“Proof enough. Even if the waif was gone, the whale was dead, and I can show that the warp coiled around the body was the warp of my ship.”

The captain of the other vessel thundered back, “The whale belongs to this ship, and the oil and bone from him will stay on this ship until we get back to New Bedford, and what are you going to do about it?”

“You'll find out what we are going to do about it when we get back to that port.”

And the visiting captain went to his boat. They did find out, for when they returned, the United States Court held that the ship whose first mate killed the whale was entitled to the value of the oil and bone.

The subject of the second lawsuit was a bowhead in which we were interested, and a big one, too. Both our vessel and another one laid claim to it. When, on a very fair day for that part of the world, bowheads were sighted, all our boats were lowered. As a rule the cap-



tain of a whaler did not go in a boat, but remained on the ship with the cooper, steward, cook, spare hands and so forth. But now and then the captain would take a hand in whaling.

Twice before, during the voyage, Captain Gamans had commanded a boat, and each time had been unsuccessful. There was a little fun among the men over the captain's failure — of course, with themselves — and I happened to hear a remark one day from Silva which made me believe that the officers had a little fun also, among themselves, at the captain's expense. I have the impression that the captain wanted to make good, for on this day he decided to go in the boat.

There were several bowheads in sight, and rather far off. Our men pulled away lustily, but when we were pretty near a big fellow, shy and sly, like all of his kind, down he went, and when he came up the signal from the ship showed him so far away that we gave up the chase. Two other boats were in pursuit of whales, and they, too, were unsuccessful, while the fourth boat made fast to a bowhead. Then there was a commotion in the boat, the



men moving around quickly as if something had happened. Lakeum said, "It's the captain's boat. I hope he hasn't had any more bad luck. It looks to me as if they have cut the line. I hope nobody's hurt. We'll make for her." And so we did, while the two unsuccessful boats put back to the ship.

When we came up, the captain told us that they had hardly struck when there was a kink in the line, and they immediately cut the warp. "But," he exclaimed, "there are two irons in him, and there is nothing to do but chase him up. The whale didn't sound for a long period and the direction he took was to wind'rd." There was no stepping the mast and setting the sail, so the men in the two boats tugged away at the oars.

We pursuers were soon outdistanced. Our own ship had not been able to work to windward, and so had to beat her way in the direction we were taking. As Lakeum pushed on my oar, he said, "These bowheads are so shy and cunning you are only sure of them when they are cut-in and stowed down. It may be that fellow will hold up till we reach him, but I should feel more satisfied if it was a sperm."

We had been pulling for an hour or more, and we were tired and, I think, pretty cross, when Lakeum said, "There's a boat clear ahead, and, as far as I can see, it's fast to a whale." This was encouraging, if the whale were the one the captain's boat had lost. But what chance was there? I think if it had been put to vote, our men would have voted that the chase was a foolish one. But it wasn't a foolish one. Even sailors are often mistaken as to things which happen on the sea. Our boat was just a little ahead of the captain's and when we arrived the whale was in the last flurry and soon rolled over. Captain Gamans was an assertive man, and was never much troubled with modesty.

"That whale belongs to me," he shouted.

It had seemed to me that the captain took some risk in his assertion, but nothing ventured, nothing gained.

"Guess again," said the mate of the other boat.

"You'll find two fresh harpoons in him, with the cypher of my ship on them," insisted Gamans.

The mate of the boat merely ignored our

captain and gave orders to attach the towline. The men obeyed as if they were unaware that there were claimants of the whale in the neighborhood.

Captain Gamans was exasperated and shouted, "My ship's harpoons are in that whale, and I claim the whole carcass, bone and all."

"Keep on claiming," replied the mate.

"I can see the line attached to the harpoon, and I'm going to keep on claiming my ship's property, and I'm going to have it, too."

"How are you going to get it?" inquired the mate, who now looked defiance, and kept changing the lance from one hand to the other, as if he was about to use it for some other purpose than on the bowhead's body.

"I'm going to cut out them harpoons and examine them myself."

"No, you're not."

"We'll see about it. You know what the usage is — you see our vessel there working up from the leeward. What does that mean? Here are our two boats in the open sea. What does that mean? Here's a whale with fresh harpoons in him. What does that mean? And

the whale killed by the boat of another vessel, for there's your vessel to the windward bearing down on us. What does that mean?"

"What are you, a lawyer? You talk as if you was making an argument to a jury, but there's only six men in the boat and that's only half a jury."

This produced a laugh, and our captain was now furious.

"Did you hear what I said?" he shrieked.

"No, I didn't. I was calculatin' how much this old fellow would stow down and how much bone he would yield. Then I was figurin' how much the whole thing would bring in money. Then I was makin' out what we men in this boat would get on our lays. When a man's usin' his mind on heavy matters, he ain't got no time to attend to little things."

Our boat was between the captain's and that of the stranger. Captain Gamans called out, "Lakeum, back water and give me a chance."

I saw that Lakeum did not want to comply, but the command was from his superior, and he was bound to obey. Lakeum gave the order in a slow tone, and we oarsmen re-



sponded with more alacrity, for we wanted to see what the outcome would be. As the captain's boat advanced, he exclaimed:

"Now I'm going to show you the harpoons of my ship in that whale."

"No, you ain't."

"There they are," declared the captain, "and the short warps attached to them."

"You can't prove it," roared the stranger.

"We'll see if I can't," retorted the captain.

The bow of our boat touched the stranger's on the port side, near the stern. Each man brandished his lance, and it looked like a battle, which might result perhaps in a tragedy, when a voice rang out:

"Jessup, put up your lance. I'll handle this matter."

In our excitement we were not aware that a boat had been approaching, and now, as we heard the sharp command and turned to look at the craft, we rightly inferred that it belonged to the vessel bearing down on us from the windward.

Our captain fixed his gaze on the stranger; the expression of anger left his face; his lips just parted; his eyes sparkled. Then he mut-

tered, "I can hardly believe it." But he did seem to believe it, for he called out, "Is that you, Gates? I thought you was in New Bedford."

"Well, Gamans, I knew you wasn't there, but I didn't expect to see you here. I thought you was in the Arctic this season."

"I was last year, but where did you come from, Gates?"

"I'm master of the *Oriole*, the old ship you and I were boat-steerers in some years ago. And there she is, bearing down on us. But what's this row about?"

"Your mate is laying claim to my whale. We struck him a while ago and the lines parted. Then we followed him up with all speed and when we got here we found that your mate's boat had put irons in him, and the whale didn't turn over until after we arrived."

"Can you show your irons in him?"

"I can, if I have a chance."

There was a laugh all around, and the mate of the *Oriole* seemed to assent to the merriment, for a faint smile lighted his countenance.

“I’ll give you the chance,” Gates responded.

The two captains examined the leviathan, and, sure enough, there were two fresh irons in the whale with a short piece of warp attached to each. We laid on our oars, awaiting the result. Captain Gamans examined the harpoons carefully and then, turning to Captain Gates, said, “There’s our cypher stamped in each of them.”

Captain Gamans maintained that the case came within the usage acknowledged and followed by whalers. Captain Gates replied, “I don’t know but it does, Gamans, but I can’t give up that whale for old friendship’s sake. I have my owners to look out for as well as officers and crew. It seems as if our men did some of the killing. Be that as it may, I’ll tell you what I’ll do. You take the whale and then we’ll gam this evening and draw up some kind of an agreement which shall state all the facts to satisfy our owners, and which may be evidence in court, if the case can’t be settled in any other way. I want to see your ship, for I’ve never been in her before. But you know

the *Oriole* of old, so I'm going to invite myself aboard of your vessel."

"Good," said Captain Gamans. Then he continued earnestly, "What's the news from home?"

"The chief news is the war."

"What war?"

"The Civil War."

"I didn't know that war could be civil. I thought it was pretty uncivil."

"Don't you know there's war between the North and the South?"

"What do you mean?"

"Why, the southern States have left the country — that is, they haven't cleared out, but have left the government and set up one of their own. Each side has armies, and there's fighting going on."

"I declare," said Captain Gamans. "This is the first time we've heard of it. We learned that a man named Lincoln was elected President, but the war's a surprise."

We were all excited, and as we pulled for our ship there was general regret that we knew so little of the great conflict, and that it would be many months before we should know more.



The vessels kept near each other that night — what night there was. At about six bells Captain Gates came aboard, and some of us were anticipating a nice gam with the men who brought him in the boat, when Lakeum came to me and said, “The captain wants you in the cabin.”

What did it mean? I had no right in that part of the ship unless summoned; and, indeed, I had not been in the cabin since the voyage began. Was I supposed to be guilty of some offense, and was I to appear before the captain as a criminal appears before a judge?

I entered with mingled fear and anticipation, and received from Captain Gamans the curt statement, “I sent for you because you’re a good penman, as I’ve seen from your handwriting in the logbook. And you’ve had a better education than most of us, even if you are a boy. We shall want you in a few minutes. Sit down there until we are ready, and keep quiet.”

I complied, but my heart was with the visitors on deck, and I listened listlessly to the rambling conversation of the captains. The only subject of any interest to me was the ref-

erence to their going in the boats, and this ended the colloquy.

“How many times have you been in the boat, Gates?” asked our captain.

“Three times.”

“What luck?”

“None, twice — third time, uncertain. And you, Gamans?”

“Three times.”

“What luck?”

“None, twice — third time, uncertain.”

Both men saw the joke and laughed heartily.

Captain Gamans fumbled about and brought out some letter paper, a small bottle of ink, which had not been opened, and an aged penholder to which was attached a rusty pen. I dug out the cork of the bottle with a knife, and then the two captains began their dictation. There was little difference in their view of the situation and in their respective claims to the whale. The trouble seemed to be their inability to express themselves in proper English, and I was quite proud when they relied on me, occasionally, to supply a word and straighten out their sentences, al-

though, by their manner, they seemed to regard me, all the time, as an inferior. To shorten the story, the agreement, in its final form was as follows:

It is agreed by the captains of the *Oriole* and *Seabird* as follows: The captain's boat of the *Seabird* struck a bowhead in the Okhotsk sea. The harpoons held, but the lines parted, and the bowhead made off. Two *Seabird's* boats followed the whale in the direction he took. It was a long pull, for the whale was out of sight. At last the two boats came up to where a boat of the *Oriole* had struck and was killing a bowhead. The mate of the *Oriole* used the lance and the bowhead rolled over after the *Seabird's* boats had arrived on the spot. The captain of the *Seabird* claimed the whale as belonging to his ship, and the mate of the *Oriole* denied the claim. While a discussion was going on, the captain of the *Oriole* came up in his boat and interfered, and it was agreed between the captains that they should examine the whale to see if there were fresh harpoons in him. Pretty soon they found two with a small end of line attached in each case. On washing the irons, they found in them the cypher which showed that the irons belonged to the *Seabird*. Both captains lay

claim to the whale. They have drawn up this agreement for the benefit of their owners, and, if their owners cannot agree as to who owns the whale, then this statement may be used in court as a true statement of the facts, if the court agrees to its being used. Both of us have signed our names hereto.

When I had made a good copy of the above stipulation, that is, as good a copy as I could make with the worthless pen, I passed the paper over to my superiors for them to sign.

“You sign first, Gates.”

“No, you sign first, Gamans.”

“I’ve got a little rheumatism in my hand, Gates.”

“I’ve got a kink in my forefinger, Gamans.”

I wanted to say, “What is the use of making all this fuss? Neither of you can hardly more than sign his name, but that’s no disgrace. Some of the ablest captains have little education and, if they had been educated, they probably never would have risen to be captains. And here you two men are acting like old women who, when they sign their names, give all manner of excuses because their handwriting is so poor.”



“Give me the pen, then,” said our captain.

It took a mighty effort for him to write his name. He twisted his body and cramped his fingers, and, when the task was over, handed me the pen with a gesture of impatience.

I said, in a very respectful tone, “Don’t you think you had better write underneath the words, ‘Captain of the *Seabird?*’”

“Look here, young fellow, do you suppose I am going to write a book?” he replied, sharply.

“The boy’s right, Gamans.”

“I think it will do no harm if I do it for you, as you have written your name in full,” I suggested.

“Go ahead, then.”

Then Captain Gates repeated our captain’s performance, and the last-named deliberately folded up the paper and put it in his pocket. “Where do I come in, Gamans? How can you keep that paper when I ain’t got none?”

“I’ll keep it for you; I’m honest.”

The two men had been very friendly that evening, and a bottle and two empty glasses in sight justified at least the inference of conviviality. It looked for the first time like a

clash, when I modestly intimated that a copy might be made and executed like the original. Consent was given, and the copy was made and signed with the same fuss which attended the execution of the original.

Serenity restored, Captain Gates said, "I'll tell you where I've got you, Gamans. It's in the long distance you rowed from the time you struck the whale and lost him until you reached our boat."

"And I'll tell you where I've got you, Gates. When our boats got up to the whale, your mate hadn't used the lance, and the whale hadn't yet rolled over."

A glance from Captain Gamans told me that I was dismissed. I was glad to get forward where the visiting crew were. They were giving our men the news from home.

When one of them caught sight of me, he blurted out, "Hullo, Tom Haggass, the last time I saw you, you were raidin' my father's orchard."

"Well," I rejoined, "the last time I saw you was three years ago, when you cut a caper and were threatened with the State Reform

School. Besides, I'm not Tom Haggass. My name is Homer Bleechly."

A roar greeted the rejoinder. The captains appeared. As the boat pulled away we gave them a hearty parting. A quarrel had been averted and a good time enjoyed.

Now as to the whale. The usage was on our side and, when we reached home, we learned that it had been affirmed by the court in a case whose facts were almost identical with ours. The oil and bone of that bowhead brought forty-five hundred dollars.

## CHAPTER XIV

### PITCAIRN ISLAND

We left the Okhotsk in September, with twelve hundred and fifty barrels of whale oil and thirteen thousand pounds of bone, besides the sperm we had taken. When it was learned that we were bound home and, presumably, were not to call anywhere, there was discontent and grumbling among the men. The captain was condemned for two reasons. We needed a supply of vegetables and meat, and the men were now so weary of the sea that they wanted shore leave once more. Fancy, then, our satisfaction when word was passed round that the captain proposed to call at Pitcairn Island and remain there for several days. This meant that we would take on board fruit, vegetables, goats, fowl and so forth. When I was a little boy, my father told me all about the mutineers of the *Bounty*, and their resi-



dence on Pitcairn Island for nearly twenty years without the world knowing anything about them or they knowing anything about the world. Later I read the story of Fletcher Christian and his companions, and, in my last year in High School, and not long before shipping on the *Seabird*, I wrote a composition on the subject, which I now offer as a schoolboy's narrative:

In the latter part of the eighteenth century, a vessel, named the *Bounty*, was sent out from England to Tahiti to obtain young breadfruit plants and carry them to the West Indies. It was thought that their cultivation would produce an excellent article of food for the negroes on the plantations. Of this vessel William Bligh was captain and Fletcher Christian was mate. The voyage was not a pleasant one, and there was great discontent because of the poor food and the cruelty of the captain. The vessel arrived at Tahiti in October, 1788, and remained there several months, while officers and crew were engaged in gathering breadfruit plants and stowing them away on the vessel. On April 4, the vessel set sail. There was no abatement of Bligh's tyranny, his treatment of Christian being par-

ticularly harsh and abusive. The accusations of falsehood and theft, and the recollection of the indignities he had been compelled to bear with patience and forbearance during the voyage forced Christian to mutiny, as he knew that it would be fruitless, as a junior officer, to bring his superior to a court martial. Bligh and eighteen others were put in a boat and cut adrift. A landing was effected by them at an island about thirty miles distant, where one of their number was killed by the natives. Thence they set out on the open sea and, after a voyage of over thirty-six hundred miles, and encountering all kinds of weather, and enduring great sufferings from hunger and thirst, they reached a Dutch settlement on the island of Timor. They eventually reached England.

Christian, having become captain of the *Bounty*, took the vessel to the small island of Toubouai and then to Tahiti. There all the mutineers preferred to remain except Christian, Alexander Smith and seven others. These last took wives at Tahiti and six men as servants, and embarked and set sail. When Bligh and his associates reached England, much interest was manifested in his adventure, and the British Government took steps to apprehend the members of the *Bounty's* crew who had remained at Tahiti. A number

of them were brought back to England and tried, and three of them were found guilty, and executed.

We now return to the *Bounty*. Fletcher Christian belonged to an English family of repute and prominence. A brother was a learned man and a college professor.

The design of Fletcher was to seek some island where he and his companions would be safe from discovery. Captain Cartaret, in 1767, discovered a solitary island in the Pacific Ocean between Australia and South America and named it Pitcairn after a midshipman who was the first to observe it. A copy of Captain Cartaret's "Voyage to the South Seas" was among the books left on board the *Bounty*, and its description of this lovely island, it is thought, determined Christian to seek it as a probably safe retreat for himself and companions. Because of the want of correctness in the latitude and longitude, laid down by Cartaret in the charts, the cruise lasted several weeks. At last they sighted what was apparently a rock, rising high in the ocean. It was a welcome sight, although there was nothing to indicate that there was a beautiful interior with fertile valleys and mountain sides clothed with palms. The *Bounty*

was beached at a bend in the shore, which has ever since borne the name of "Bounty Bay."

On landing, Christian divided the island into nine portions, one for himself and the remainder for his companions. Then everything was removed from the vessel — planks from her sides, nails, bolts, masts, spars, sails, and her cargo of provisions, tools, guns, ammunition, implements, goats, pigs and hens. Then they set fire to the hull and it was completely burned up.

Christian now became a changed man. He stocked a cave with water and provisions and would spend whole days there, evidently intending to make it his retreat in the event of pursuit and discovery, and, no doubt, indulging in bitter reflections. For three years all went well, and then trouble began when the whites endeavored to impose upon their native servants. A plot to kill all the white men was discovered by their wives, and thwarted. This plot was followed by another, which partially succeeded. Christian was shot dead, while cultivating his garden, and four of the other Englishmen were also despatched. The survivors, feeling that they were not secure from attacks, determined to destroy all the Tahitian men, and this purpose was carried into effect.

If quiet and contentment followed these



barbarities they were of short duration, for tragedies were in store. One of the four, named McCoy, made an ardent spirit from a root, and he and one Quintail were constantly intoxicated. McCoy threw himself from some rocks, and was killed, and Quintail became so threatening and dangerous that Young and Smith, the last of the nine, destroyed him to preserve their own lives. This was the last scene in the dreadful drama.

Edward Young and Alexander Smith now experienced a complete change of life. Resort was made to a Bible and prayer-book, which Christian had brought with him, and which he himself had studied. Daily, morning and evening prayer was established, as well as a system of religious instruction. Young did not long survive, and in 1800 Alexander Smith was the sole surviving man on the island. In the meantime children had been born, and the responsibility and the direction of the affairs of the little colony rested on Smith.

Nearly twenty years passed without the world knowing what had become of the *Bounty*, when information came in a curious and interesting way. In September, 1808, the attention of Mayhew Folger, captain of the American ship *Topaz*, was called to a rocky island rising abruptly from the sea. Smoke



was seen, and there were other signs of habitation. A tremendous surf was beating on the shore, and the captain was doubtful about a landing place, when a canoe was seen approaching. The occupants hailed the new arrivals in good English, and cordially invited them to land. The captain declined, but a sailor volunteered to go in the canoe, provided the ship stood in near to the land, so that he might swim back, if an attack was attempted. On landing, the sailor was accosted by Smith, who told him the whole tragic story of the *Bounty*, and informed him that the birth of children had brought the population to thirty-five persons, and that he was the sole guardian and instructor. This intelligence was communicated to the captain, and he landed forthwith. Smith was anxious, after the long exile, to learn the world's news. So the captain gave him an account of it, laying emphasis on the fact that a little man named Napoleon Bonaparte had come to the front, in France, had usurped the throne and had overrun Europe with his armies, but that England had won great victories on the sea — an announcement which was greeted by Smith with the exclamation, "Old England forever!"

When Captain Folger gave his story to the world, the interest taken in it soon subsided,

and six years elapsed before the island was again visited. In 1814 two British frigates — the *Briton* and the *Tagus* — appeared, but this was accidental, as the island was not laid down on their charts. A canoe came out to the *Briton* and there was a request from one of the two occupants, “Won’t you heave us a rope now?” When asked, “Who are you?” he replied, “I am Thursday October Christian, son of Fletcher Christian, the mutineer, by a Tahitian mother, and the first-born on the island.” His companion was Edward Young, son of the midshipman of that name in the *Bounty*. Thursday October Christian was so named for the day and month of his birth. Every one was impressed by the courteous deportment of the young men, and they were shown over the ship. They were absorbed in everything, astonished when they saw a cow, which they took to be a large goat, and greatly interested in a little, black terrier. Edward Young observed, “I know that is a dog. I have heard of such things.” Refreshments were offered them in the cabin. Before partaking, and at the conclusion of the repast, they sought the divine blessing.

When the captains went ashore, they were received by Smith, who had changed his name to John Adams since the visit of Captain

Folger, to avoid recognition. He was hardly more than fifty and was hearty and robust in appearance, but his countenance was that of one aged and worn. He disclosed to his visitors the terrible events which had occurred, but he stoutly maintained that he took no part in the mutiny, and he expressed his disapproval of Captain Bligh's treatment of both officers and men. When asked if he would like to return to England, he replied in the affirmative and expressed his love for the land of his birth; but his family and friends would not allow of his leaving the island.

The officers were not only impressed with the moral aspect of the community, but were greatly interested in the natural beauty of the island. Its mountains rose to a height of more than a thousand feet above the sea, and about their summits circled countless sea-birds. The slopes down to the water's edge were covered with groves of palm and coconut and breadfruit trees. In the valleys tropical fruits were produced in abundance, and the visitors were particularly interested in the Taroroot, from which bread was made. The only songster was a small species of flycatcher, but, later, warblers from Valparaiso were introduced.

On an elevated platform stood the little

village of Pitcairn. The houses surrounded a grassy square, protected by palisades to preserve it from the depredations of goats, hogs, and poultry which roamed about the island. The houses were built of boards, the sides and ends planed and made to ship and unship on account of the warm weather. The interior of the houses bespoke comfort and cleanliness, and the beds and bedding were very neat. Each dwelling had a pen for hogs, another for fowl and a building for manufacturing cloth. The linen was made of the bark of the paper mulberry tree, steeped in water, and then beaten out to the proper thickness by pieces of wood. Varieties of cloth were also made from the breadfruit tree and a kind of fig.

The visitors were assured that each person considered his possession as held for the general good, so disputes were easily settled; and, if hasty words were uttered, the offender was ever willing to make amends. Adams deeply impressed the captains of the frigates. They made a favorable report to the Admiralty, but little interest was taken, and Pitcairn was neglected.

At length, John Buffett, one of the crew of a whale ship which touched there, was so pleased with the place that he manifested a desire to remain, and he was released from the



ship. Not long after another sailor, John Evans, joined the community. Both men married Pitcairn girls. In 1825 the *Blossom*, Captain Beechy, a British man-of-war, appeared off the island. During his stay of three weeks, Captain Beechy gave close attention to conditions, customs and proceedings. Sunday was strictly observed, and there were five services in the day. Meals were prepared the day before, so that there might be little work on the Sabbath. The fare consisted of pork or fowl, which, according to the Tahitian method, was baked between stones. There were vegetables, bread or pudding made of the taroroot, and breadfruit. At this time there was enough water for all wants, the supply coming from tanks cut in the rocks. There was only a small natural stream. Captain Beechy touched upon the mutiny. Adams talked freely, but affirmed that he had taken no part in it.

In 1828 a third seafaring man came to the island and became, like Evans and Buffett, a permanent settler. His name was George Hunn Nobbs. On March 29, 1829, John Adams, the beloved pastor and teacher, passed away, and Nobbs succeeded him.

On his return, Captain Beechy memorialized the Admiralty, stating that as the popula-

tion increased there would be a scarcity of both water and food.

In 1830 there were eighty-seven persons in the colony, which was visited by a long drought; and fears of a famine were entertained. On the Government's proposal, they all removed to Tahiti, where Thursday October Christian died. The lax morals of the inhabitants were distasteful to the Pitcairners, and the Buffett family and a few others returned to the island only to find their plantations ruined by the animals which had run wild in their absence. Soon after an American brig brought back the remaining families, and all set to work to restore their ravaged houses and gardens.

Now all seemed favorable again, but a bitter experience was awaiting them. Soon appeared a man named Joshua Hill, who announced that he had been sent out by the Government to assume direction of the affairs of the island. He assumed absolute authority and proved himself as great a tyrant as he was imposter. Nobbs, Buffett and Evans were compelled to leave the island. Fortunately in 1838 Hill was taken away to Valparaiso, and the exiled men returned.

The island now was more frequently visited by ships, and Pitcairn became better known to

the world. In 1848 the surgeon of a vessel named the *Colypso* was conducted to the east end of the island and, reaching a place, the approach to which was extremely dangerous, he made drawings of figures on the face of the rocks which represented the sun, moon, birds and even human beings. On his return the people showed him ancient spear and arrow-heads.

Captain James Wood of the *Pandora*, which arrived in July, 1849, gave, in a letter, an interesting account of the settlement and people. He described the young folks as good looking, having fine teeth, pleasant faces and fine figures, generally clad in a long white jacket with a dark-colored wrapper fastened around the waist and hanging down to the ankles, wearing neither shoes nor stockings, and having large and broad feet. He also said that their hair was long, kept clean by the aid of coconut oil, and so turned up behind as not to need a comb.

As the population increased, it was regarded as desirable for the whole colony to be transported to Norfolk Island. This conclusion was reached with profound regret. The total number thus conveyed was one hundred and ninety-four. Elaborate preparations were

made for them, and their reception was a kind one.

After writing my composition it appeared that, in 1858, two families by the name of Young returned to Pitcairn and other families soon followed. In October, 1860, the inhabitants numbered seventeen.



## CHAPTER XV

### THE VISIT TO PITCAIRN

While our voyage had been a successful one, our outfits were not all exhausted; we had material enough for the capture of a few more sperm whales provided we could see them. The captain, however, was anxious to reach home, and orders were no longer given to shorten sail at night. So the old *Seabird* made pretty good time for a vessel of her type. There was not a member of the crew who had not heard of Pitcairn, and one had visited the spot, and he was loud in his praises of it and the people. This was before the departure to Norfolk in the early fifties of the last century. He told us of the kindness of the Pitcairners, of the noble bearing of the men and of the beauty and kindness of the women.

“I took a great fancy to two of them — John and Ruth Quintail,” he said. “They were grandchildren of one of the mutineers.

John was twenty and Ruth eighteen. They did everything they could do for a common sailor like me. They were both pretty religious like most of the people, but they were full of fun. They could swim like ducks, and while I was there Ruth swam round the island. She used to wear an orange blossom in her beautiful hair. Our American girls are called fair, but she was the fairest girl I have ever seen. I suppose Ruth and John are at Norfolk Island now and will never go back to Pitcairn."

Our interest constantly deepened, and I think that even the staidest old tars were as expectant as if they had been boys. There are no coral reefs around Pitcairn; it is of volcanic origin and is sometimes likened to a rock rising out of the ocean. It is only two and a half miles in length, and a mile in width. It was about midday when we caught sight of it. While the ocean seemed rather calm, yet as we drew near I noticed what I had already read, that the waves dashed fiercely against it. There was only one place suitable for landing, and even then a boat had to be skilfully managed in order to avoid disaster. When not far

from shore the ship was hove to, and then a white flag was displayed which told that they saw us and that we were welcome. Soon a boat put out and, as it came alongside, I noticed that it was a dugout. One of the two occupants was particularly interesting to me. As he moved about the deck he caught sight of me and, approaching, said:

“ You and I must be of about the same age. I am sixteen and my name is James Russell.”

He was so pleasant and unassuming that I could not help saying to myself that he would never make a sailor. Our visitors extended to the captain a cordial invitation to visit the island and assured him of a warm welcome. Of course this was intended to include officers and crew. The captain made fitting acknowledgment, rather unusual for one generally so abrupt, and replied that on the morrow there would be shore leave for all except the few required to manage the ship.

We were like schoolboys that night, anxious and expectant. In the dawn the island seemed one high peak covered with green creeping plants and trumpet vines. As we approached in the boats a man standing on an elevation

showed us where to land. The surf was beating fiercely on rock and beach, but we glided ashore without any casualty. Nearly all of the eighteen then inhabiting the island were there to receive us. Russell sought me out and brought me to a young woman to whom I was presented in a very pleasant way. Her name was Sarah McCoy.

The ascent was slow as the path leading to the upland was very steep. On arriving at the top, we were told that the large open space was the market-place where trading was carried on with the whalers who occasionally called at the island. Thence we passed by a pretty path winding through tropic trees to what was called the town. Many of the buildings showed signs of neglect, the result of the abandonment of the island only a few years before. Our guests had restored some of the buildings, and to our surprise the interior of the houses and their furnishings were about the same as those of our own homes in America.

Now let me describe Sarah McCoy. She was eighteen years of age and while she was of dark complexion and had raven black hair, which was prettily decorated with an orange



blossom, yet in form and feature, in conversation and deportment, there was much of the Anglo-Saxon. Her attire was of tappa cloth, although I was told that all the islanders had European clothing. Her teeth were beautiful. The features were regular and the combination was pleasing. We were told that we were to be parcelled out among the people for dinner, and it was arranged that I was to be one of six who were to enjoy the cooking of Sarah McCoy.

The young girl said, with a laugh, "We are the most civilized people in the world, in one respect, and that is cooking. We have no stoves, yet we cook food in a very short time, and we think very much better than food cooked in stoves. The dinner is all prepared and there is only one thing to do to make it ready for the table. Come, James Russell and I will show you over the island."

The girl was so artless, innocent and winning that I was quite carried away with her. She was full of fun, and at times almost boisterous with laughter, but modest and natural withal. Everywhere we went we saw goats, pigs and fowl running wild, and I knew that

this meant a bountiful supply for our ship. I wish I could fittingly describe the scenery. From countless fragrant herbs and lime and orange trees delicious odors filled the air. The coconut trees were supplied with tall plumes which waved gently above our heads, and I should have thought that I was in some land of enchantment, far away from the world, had it not been for the sound of the breakers beating against the shore.

My companions led me to a rocky elevation overlooking the sea.

“How beautiful!” I exclaimed.

“Yes, beautiful to you,” said young Russell, “but we see it all the time. We study and read about England and America and long to see the beautiful things there, isn’t that so, Sarah?”

“Yes, indeed,” replied the young girl. “How much I would like to see England, for in reality we are all English here.” The young girl paused and soon continued, “They tell me that the American girls are bright and beautiful. Is it not so?”

What could a great boy like myself say to a question like that? I think she meant to re-

lieve me of my embarrassment, for she said cheerily,

“Tell me about the American girls — how they look and what they do?”

In my simple boyish way I tried to comply, but not very successfully; and I think she helped me out some by asking a second question before I could answer the first. Suddenly she broke out, “There are two things that girls do the world over — they sing and dance. I would like to hear your girls sing and see them dance. I suppose we all sing alike but we dance differently. We have a simple dance which came to us from our Tahitian grandmothers. Yours is different; you glide around in kind of circles, I think; but that would be impossible for me.”

I think that, if the girl had thought a moment, she would not have made this allusion to her large bare feet which had never known shoes. There was a troubled look to her eyes. Then there came a ringing laugh.

“But we girls can put our feet to a noble use. Swimming is as easy to us as it is to the water fowl. We take to it from infancy. Only yesterday I swam round the island.”

“Swam round the island!” I exclaimed.

“Yes, that is nothing,” she said. “It is only about five miles.”

And now Young Russell plied me with all kinds of questions about American boys — how they looked and what they did — and about American cities and what they looked like. I endeavored to answer as well as I could. When it came to cities, I told him I never had been in but one — the little city I came from.

And so we strolled back to the point of departure, chatting away like old friends meeting after a long separation. It was with deep interest that I watched the preparation of the food that was to constitute our repast. Sarah’s mother was there — not so dark as her daughter, but comely and pleasant.

“Come,” said the young girl, “and see how your dinner is prepared and cooked.”

Just outside the house was a hole in the ground which was used as an oven. Sarah covered the bottom of it with fresh plaintain leaves. From a fire near by heated stones were pitched into the hole and covered with another layer of leaves. Then yams, breadfruit and



sweet potatoes, four large fowl wrapped in tappa cloth, and three great cakes, made of yams and plaintains beaten up and similarly covered, were laid in. Over them all were placed more leaves and heated stones, and over the stones another great layer of leaves. Above all, to keep in the heat, was laid a piece of old canvas. Pointing at it, Sarah said with a laugh:

“That came from a ship which stopped here, and it is the only thing you see to remind you of civilization. Now in civilized countries,” she continued, “it takes a long time to cook things. In twenty minutes to half an hour, gentlemen, your dinner will be ready. The steam does it.”

I never before had taken Kreelman for a wit, but this time he was equal to the occasion.

“The steam does it, miss, just as you say. And there’s a place in America where they ain’t civilized because they cook with steam, too.”

I think we were all as surprised as we were interested.

“Where?” was the general question.

“And they use rockweed instead of plain-tain leaves.”

That gave us sailors the clew, and we laughed.

The girl was puzzled. Kreelman asked:

“Did you ever hear of a Rhode Island clambake, miss?”

Of course she had not, and Kreelman enlightened her as to the similar method of cooking with heated stones. In twenty-five minutes Sarah threw off the canvas and we men pitched off the stones. Sarah tested the good things with a fork, and pronounced them well done. Then pointing at what looked like a coffee-pot on the live coals of the fire near by, she said:

“There is something that looks like civilization. In it is a drink that tastes like coffee, which we make from roots and herbs.”

We sat down in the house, and the women proposed to wait on us; but we protested. So the good things were brought in, and we all sat down together. And what a repast! One may say that the things merely seemed delicious because we had lived for many months on ship fare. Perhaps that quickened our

appetite, but after all these long years I must say that I never enjoyed a better-cooked meal. After we rose, I noticed on the wall a picture of Queen Victoria, and beneath it written in a large, free hand a National Anthem, composed by Reverend G. H. Nobbs. He was the beloved pastor who was now with most of his flock at Norfolk Island. There were three stanzas. I was granted permission to copy them. The first stanza is as follows:

'Mid the mighty Southern Ocean  
Stands an isolated rock,  
Blanchèd by the surf's commotion,  
Riven by the lightning's shock.  
Hark those strains to heaven ascending  
From those slopes of vivid green,  
Old and young, their voices blending —  
God preserve Britannia's Queen!

After dinner, a messenger announced that a little later hosts and guests would meet in the open space just in front of the houses, which constituted what they called the town. Our little party was there early, and a pleasant thing it was to see the people gather; an islander, for example, coming with three or four of our men, all talking and laughing, and making one feel that he would like to ex-

change the trials and turmoil and temptations of the world for the sweet rest and quiet of this little island. Our hosts entertained us with songs, concluding with the National Anthem which was rendered with fine effect. Then our captain whispered to Lakeum, who in chosen words expressed our gratitude for the hospitality rendered and wished the colony abundant blessings and especially happiness and prosperity. I think we were all proud of Lakeum, and we were fortunate to have him as our spokesman, as he was the only one of our company who was capable of creditably expressing himself.

The leave-takings were reserved for the place where we had landed, and a happy throng we were as we strolled along to the shore. If some difficulty attended our landing, more awaited our departure. Ours was the first craft to confront the surf and, staunch old whaleboat as it was on the open sea, it was unequal to the situation, for over it went, tumbling us all into the water. A loud laugh went up from the spectators, and several of the islanders plunged into the sea to help us. We righted the boat and, under the directions



of our friends, mounted the crests successfully, and the other boats followed us. But something else followed us as well — the kindly adieus of the Pitcairners.

The next day liberty was given the ship-keepers, and the captain, Lakeum and Silva went ashore with them, carrying trade to be exchanged for supplies. We were notified that the bargaining would take a good part of the day, and that on the appearance of the white flag we were to lower the boats and make for the shore. About the middle of the afternoon, the signal appeared, and three boats put out. As we rested on our oars at a spot about a hundred yards from the beach, we witnessed the storing in the native dugouts of pigs, goats, fowl, fruit and vegetables, which were to be transferred to our craft. The islanders were so apt and clever that the transfer was easily effected, and as we pulled for the ship I saw Sarah for the last time. She was standing on a bank waving her hand, and Russell was beside her. He joined with a parting gesture. I experienced a feeling like that which distressed me when the *Seabird* slipped from her

moorings at the beginning of the voyage. It was a touch of homesickness.

Now the island peak loomed in black outline against a pale green sky; heavy clouds hung about the western horizon glowing with crimson imparted by the sun which had just gone to his setting; the waves were tinted with reflected hues. I was not in a frame of mind to enjoy the spectacle. My thought was of the maiden whom I should never see again, and the dew gathered in my eyes.

The crew felt kindly towards the captain, and they lauded him highly for giving them such a royal treat. As we set sail, they were happy and elated, and their joy was increased when they were informed that we were not going round the Horn, but were to make for home through the Strait of Magellan. The shortening of the voyage was the interesting feature. They had no conception of the difficulties and dilemmas they were to encounter in that hazardous passage — frequent fogs, hidden rocks and sudden squalls.

When Kreelman and I had a few minutes together, he said: “Fancy Chest, I never was in the Magellan Strait, but a sailor who was

on a merchantman told me that they went through there, and he never had such a time in his life. He said that there was a mile for every day in the year, and it took a week to get through. Once they scraped along a hidden rock, and just escaped shipwreck. I don't know why the old man wants to go through there, but I suppose he does. I never knew of a whaler goin' through there before. Bad as the Horn is, it's free sailin' there. I hope the oil, bone and ambergris is insured."

This expression of Kreelman's views was not encouraging.

"How did you like the day on shore?" I inquired.

"A great day for sailors. The old man done himself noble in giving us shore leave, and the Pitcairn folks done themselves proud in entertainin' us. It was somethin' like one of them nice, little places in a hot land. You know what I mean."

Kreelman looked at me, appealingly. "I think you mean an oasis in the desert," I volunteered.

"That's it, Fancy Chest, an oyster, only not in the desert, but in the ocean."

The man mused, then broke out, "You heard Lakeum give that talk. There ain't no man among edicated men who could have done better. I've been on the sea about all my life and I never see before a man on board a whaler like that man. You never hear no bad language and he acts different from the other men. He treats the men well, but he don't allow no nonsense. And then he carries himself well. He's got an edication, and he come from first-class folks, but, as I told you long ago, you can't find out nothin' about him. I guess, if all whalers was made up of men like him, they'd be better places to live in."



## CHAPTER XVI

### HOMeward BOUND

We saw no whales as we went south, and we approached the Strait of Magellan under what seemed to be favorable auspices. The weather was fair, the sea was tranquil and the scenery was picturesque. The strait is three hundred and sixty miles in length, and from five to thirty miles in breadth. Patagonia is to the north, and the island of Tierra del Fuego to the south. As we entered the strait and, for a good many miles as we proceeded, we saw lofty ranges covered with snow and immense glaciers, and between them patches which looked like dark forests. The third day the weather changed, and navigation became more difficult. The fog set in and, though we had seen no vessels, the captain deemed it wise to be cautious, and we made only about three or four knots an hour. In the late afternoon the fog lifted, and the captain made for the shore



*The sea became more boisterous, and the captain gave orders to throw the lead. Page 259.*



of Tierra del Fuego. The sea became more boisterous, the sky assumed a threatening aspect, and the captain gave orders to throw the lead. When four fathoms was reported, he gave orders to heave to, to take in sail and put out two anchors. In the meantime the sky grew blacker, and we all worked with a will to have the ship snugged up and ready when the storm broke.

When it came, it was more like a hurricane than a squall, and it came without any warning other than the troubled aspect of sea and sky. It seemed as if all the wind in the world were gathered in one terrific blast and that, too, for our especial benefit. It nearly swept the men off their feet and drove them to cover; it fairly shrieked as it swept through the rigging, and the only good thing about it was that it lasted less than half an hour.

Kreelman said to me, "I rather think after all that the old man knows his business. I believe he's made the voyage through here before and he knows just what to do and when to do it. By the way, Fancy Chest, who was that man Magellan they call the strait after, was he a Nantucket whaleman?"



“Oh, no. He lived a hundred years before the *Mayflower* came over. He was a Portuguese, but sailed for a Spanish king. In 1520 he made the passage through this strait from east to west, and was the first white man to cross the Pacific Ocean. He gave it the name of Pacific, stopped at the Philippines and was killed there by the natives.”

“He had some grit, didn’t he? If he hadn’t been killed, I rather think he would have returned by the way of the Horn.”

We remained at our anchorage all night. The watch reported another storm towards morning, only less violent. At daybreak the sea was calm, and a boat appeared. Never had I seen and never have I since seen such a spectacle of destitution, misery and wretchedness. The boat was a rude affair, propelled by clumsy paddles. In the center on a stone foundation was a fire, or rather a bed of live coals. The occupants of the boat were Fuegians, small in stature, badly formed and only half-clad. It would be difficult to picture people more inferior and degraded. Some huddled over the fire, and others stretched out their arms while they muttered something which

we assumed to be a request for food or clothing. The cook threw them some scraps, and, as we weighed anchor and were off, they called to us in tones from which we judged that they regarded our bounty as a scant one.

Lakeum came forward and said to me, "What do you know about these Fuegians?"

"I read up about them when I was at school. They are of a low order of intelligence and are treacherous and degraded."

Lakeum declared, "Let me tell you what an officer in our navy told me. He said that their vessel once called at the northerly side of the strait and that the Patagonians, though living close to salt water, never ventured from shore. What little they knew about boating pertained to fresh water. They had a circular craft for crossing shallow streams. They would dump into it whatever was to be transported; and then a horse was attached and he drew it to the other side. This officer also said that the Fuegians would cross the strait, steal anything they could lay their hands on, and, putting off in their boats with their plunder, would laugh at the Patagonians standing on the shore and unable to follow them."

We were a week in making the passage, and a hard week it was, too. The brief hurricanes came towards night, and the captain made due preparations, as he had warning of their coming. Fogs came and went; the air was raw and the desolation and solitude were relieved only once when we sighted a steamer in the distance. The mere glimpse of her improved our spirits and gave us courage. At the middle of the strait there were large mountains at the north, and small hills at the south. Here, on the Patagonian side, was a white settlement called Sandy Point, and used by the Chilean Government as a penal colony. We ran so near shore at this place that we could plainly see a little group of Patagonians. They were of large structure and powerfully built. I have since learned that the statement that many Patagonians are seven feet high is untrue. As we approached the eastern entrance to the strait, we noticed that the shores were low and reddish in color, and apparently sandy. Once more in the Atlantic we began to sing lustily the familiar song "Homeward Bound", the first and last stanzas of which are as follows:

We 're homeward bound, oh, happy sound!  
Good-by, fare ye well,  
Good-by, fare ye well!  
Come, rally the crew and run quick around,  
Hurrah, my bullies, we 're homeward bound!

We 're homeward bound, may the winds blow fair,  
Good-by, fare ye well,  
Good-by, fare ye well!  
Wafting us true to the friends waiting there,  
Hurrah, my bullies, we 're homeward bound!

In a couple of weeks we began to see whales, and lowered several times, but they eluded us. When we reached the Rio de la Plata, we captured a sperm whale that boiled down sixty barrels. Imbedded in the body was a harpoon which had evidently been there for a long time. It had become so rusted that we could not discover a trace of the owner's or ship's name. I always took an interest in trophies and asked Lakeum if I might have it. My request was granted, and the rusty old reminder of the lost art of whaling is still in my possession.

As we neared home, Kreelman began to take an interest in my welfare — no longer with sharp words and in a haughty manner, but rather as a father gives counsel to a son.

“Fancy Chest,” he said, “I come from poor



folks back in the country, so I thought I would like to follow the sea. I was a young fellow when I reached New Bedford and shipped on a whaler, and in a few years I'll be an old man. I've been on the sea a good part of my life, and I don't know nothin' but salt water. Now what have I made out of it? Mighty little. I've never spent the little that was comin' to me, but put it by for old age. I haven't any home or any friends, and all my folks is dead. I shall ship on whalers so long as they'll let me, and I may die on shipboard and be buried at sea, but it doesn't matter whether on land or sea. Now what are you goin' to do, Fancy Chest — follow the sea or stick to the land and do somethin' else?"

"The sea looks pretty attractive to me. I was warned before I left home that the foremast hand got very little out of a voyage. Every one on this vessel is going to get a little fortune, and why shouldn't I follow the sea?"

"You forget," Kreelman rejoined, "that the ambergris is a good part of our catch, and you might sail the seas a hundred years without seeing another pound of it. I suppose you hope to be a captain some day, but it's a long

road before you get there. Then, if you marry, you are away from your home about half of your life. Remember that all voyages are not successful. If you stick to the sea you'll never have a voyage that begins to equal this one. Then there's another thing. I suppose you think this crew are just like the crew of any other vessel. No, they ain't. Except gettin' rid of that fellow at the Azores, this voyage of ours has run as smooth as oil. If you go on another voyage, it may be worse than bedlam."

Kreelman's counsel set me to thinking, and as the days went by I weighed the advantages and disadvantages of a whaleman's life. Then I thought of my mother — how hard it was for her to give me up, and how it pained her to part with me. I was still young, only in my eighteenth year, and the world was all before me. Then and there I determined to say to my mother at our meeting that one voyage was enough, and that I would seek employment on the land.

Days passed, and as we neared home the Civil War was a constant subject of conversation. We had, of course, no definite informa-

tion, so we indulged in conjecture. Late one day we saw smoke many miles astern of us, and we assumed that it came from a burning ship or from a steamer. The smoke increased in volume, and we soon saw that the object, which was apparently pursuing us, was a steamer. Some one said it might be a cruiser. From this inadvertent remark grew the general belief that it was a cruiser. It would soon be dark, and word was given to wet the sails. The water was passed up in buckets and the men worked diligently. The hope was that the darkness would protect us, but that hope was soon abandoned, for our supposed pursuer was fast gaining upon us. After capture the oil would be burned with the ship, but what should be done with the ambergris? It was suggested by some one that it be cut up into small pieces and concealed upon our persons, but there was not time enough to resort to that expedient. Nearer and nearer came the great black object, belching out its clouds of smoke. There was nothing on our part but resignation and also reflection on a wonderful voyage ending in collapse and ruin. When within half a mile of us the steamer veered,

and in a short time passed us. They must have seen the old whaler, but she was too insignificant for recognition. The reaction brought relief, and the relief was followed by laughter.

On the last day of April we sighted Block Island, and soon a pilot boat made for us. When the pilot boarded us he called out to the captain,

“What’s your ambergris worth?”

“How’d you know about that?” asked the captain.

“Why, all New Bedford is talkin’ about it. They say there’s more interest taken in your voyage than in any other since whalin’ begun. You’ll have a lot of visitors when you drop anchor.”

The wind came from the southwest and we made good time, soon reaching the Elizabeth Islands and then passing into the bay. We anchored at about the place from which we had sailed nearly three years before. The sharks at sea were quick to gather round the carcass of a whale; so were the gentlemen on land, of the same name, quick to gather on the deck of our vessel. These were the visitors



the pilot referred to. One of them shook me vigorously by the hand, remembered me perfectly, was sure he had fitted me out before I sailed, and would do the right thing by me now, if I would go to his shop.

"You are mistaken," I declared. "You didn't fit me out. My outfitter was a woman."

"A woman!" he exclaimed.

"Yes," I said, "my mother."

Just then some one tapped me on the shoulder. I turned and beheld my old friend, the shipkeeper. How delighted we were to meet again! How pleasant it was to hear that my parents were well!

"Bleechly," he remarked, "don't have anything to do with the outfitters. Our boat is going up soon, and we'll take you and your chest along. By the way, how did you like Lakeum?"

"Fine. I pulled the stroke oar in his boat."

"Yes, he is a fine man," said the shipkeeper, thoughtfully. "It's rare indeed that you find a man like him on a whaler."

The captain and officers went with us in the boat. Glad as I was to be home again, I felt some regret in parting from the old vessel,

scarred from the battles with wind and wave and reeking with grease and oil. I gave Lakeum a pressing invitation to go home with me and meet my parents, but he courteously declined. He showed feeling when I thanked him for his kindness to me during the voyage. I ordered the chest sent up to the house and walked briskly myself, so as to anticipate its arrival.

Of my meeting with my parents and of the assurance conveyed to my mother that I had done with the sea, I propose to say nothing. Happy was our home and delighted was my mother with the things I brought her — the handiwork of the South Sea islanders, and of the inhabitants of Pitcairn. That evening all the boys I had ever known, including my old classmates, crowded into the house and made a hero of me. All the articles I had brought were scanned and handled as if they were precious and invaluable. Strange and ridiculous questions were asked, which I answered with great dignity and with solemn demeanor. The ambergris was, of course, the subject of animated discussion. Its value naturally was greatly exaggerated, one boy putting it at a

million dollars. Then the watch was taken up, and all kinds of questions were asked as to its make and value. These I could not answer, because I had not received it. When the boys took their departure, most of them said that they were going to sea. My mother smiled and observed that their parents would have something to say upon the matter.

How strange that night it seemed to stretch out in a bed! How difficult it was to compose myself to sleep! My little room had not been occupied since my departure, and now for the time being the three years seemed to be obliterated and I was a boy once more under my father's roof. At last sleep stole on. I was visited by pleasant dreams and, when I awoke in the morning, I exclaimed, "Where am I, where am I?" only to find that I had forsaken the forecandle for the home of my youth, and as good a home as any boy ever had.

The voyages were to be settled on the following day, so I told my parents that, before officers and crew separated, there were three of our number whom I desired to invite to the house, and they approved my purpose. I made search that morning for Lakeum. Again I

wanted to press him to come to our home. I could get no trace of him. At last I bethought me of the shipkeeper.

“Bleechly,” he said, “Lakeum’s gone and left a power of attorney with a friend to settle his voyage. From what he said I think it likely that he’ll never go whaling again.” Thus this man, who had been such a true friend to me, and who had won the esteem of all the men under him for nearly three years, passed out of my life. I never saw him or heard of him again.

I found Kreelman in an outfitter’s establishment and I urged him to honor our home with his presence at supper that evening. He seemed touched and voiced his thanks most courteously but declined my invitation. Then I looked up Ohoo and found him in a sailor’s boarding house in the company of some questionable-looking individuals. I called him to one side and extended an invitation to supper.

“Me go, me tank ’ou,” he replied.

When I introduced him to my mother, in the afternoon, she observed, “My son has told me how kind your family were to him in their home in Honolulu, and now we are only too



glad to have you in our little home here in New Bedford."

"Me tank 'ou. Me sing and dance."

Ohoo conducted himself at our humble table with credit. His manners were better than those of many people of opportunities and education. In the evening he sang some of his quaint and weird native songs, and he indulged in dances which caused merriment and won applause. Just before he left my father cautioned him as to the care of the money he was soon to receive, and suggested that the savings bank take care of it during his absence on the next voyage. As a fact, the counsel later was followed, and, when Ohoo went to sea again, a goodly sum was standing to his credit in the institution my father named.

## CHAPTER XVII

### SETTLING THE VOYAGE

On the following morning, my attention was called to an article in the local newspaper declaring the voyage of the *Seabird* to be the most remarkable, if not the most profitable, in the history of whaling. The find of ambergris was pronounced to be without a parallel, and the announcement was made that gold watches were offered as prizes — one to the man who first sighted the largest bowhead that was captured, and the other to the man who first saw the largest sperm whale which was also taken. The article proceeded:

The keenness of sight of the Gay Head Indians is proverbial, and to a foremast hand of that colony was awarded the prize for the largest bowhead captured. It is with great pleasure that we announce that one of our New Bedford boys was a successful competitor. Homer Bleechly, who shipped on the

*Seabird* as a foremast hand, when hardly more than a boy, displayed the most remarkable powers of vision, actually raising more whales than any other man on the ship. One day when in the crow's nest with the Gay Header beside him, he surpassed that vigilant individual in discovering the low bushy spout of a sperm whale at a point on the horizon where his companion could detect nothing but the mere movement of the waves. The whale thus sighted proved to be a monster, and as fierce as he was physically great. He smashed two boats and severely injured two seamen. The oil he yielded stowed down just one hundred and forty-one barrels.

This statement, so far from the truth, astounded me. I learned that the information was furnished the newspaper by one of my over-zealous friends. It had the effect of advertising my success, which it will be remembered was due to a mere accident, and hence deepened the interest in the watches.

My father told me that, in settling the voyage, he did not advise the employment of a lawyer. He remarked, "You will have to pay a lawyer at least twenty-five dollars, and it's money thrown away. Sailors now are too

smart for the lawyers. This is the way they do. Where two men have the same lay and the same outfit and have had the same amount out of the slop chest, during the voyage, they agree that one of them shall have a lawyer. So this man goes in with his lawyer and his voyage is settled and he is paid off; and he pays his lawyer twenty-five dollars. Then the second man goes in all alone, and his voyage is settled and he is paid off. Then these two men get together and compare notes, and, if they find that the settlement is fair, one of them being twenty-five dollars out of pocket, in go the rest of the crew in a bunch, to settle, and the twenty-five dollars is borne by the whole crew. You don't want a lawyer. However, the only thing you want to look out for is the ambergris. It's rarely they find it, but some druggist may know what the last lot brought."

I followed the suggestion, and the druggist I visited said, "The last lot came in about fifteen years ago. There were thirty pounds, all in good condition, and it was sold in Boston for seven thousand dollars. I believe the sub-



stance is worth just as much now as it was then."

It was about eleven o'clock when I went with my father to the owner's office. Most of the crew were gathered outside on the wharf. When we entered, the only people present were the Quaker, the bookkeeper, one of the foremast hands and a lawyer.

"The only matter left," said the lawyer, "is the ambergris. I understand that it is more valuable than diamonds."

The Quaker rejoined, "I prefer to have thee talk dollars and cents. I belong to the Society of Friends, and know nothing of the value of precious stones, jewels and so forth. Friends have no use for such things."

"Well, the lump is over three hundred pounds, and I'll settle at the rate of a thousand dollars a pound — Three Hundred Thousand Dollars for the whole thing."

"Not in this office," said the Quaker quietly.

"Well, on what basis will you settle?"

"I will settle on the basis of a fair valuation and no other."

Then the lawyer launched out with a great

flow of words, accompanied by violent gestures, to show what he considered was a just valuation, concluding, "What do you think of that?"

"I think, my friend, that thee indulges in too much unprofitable language," was the reply.

"Well, then let's hear your views," said the lawyer.

The Quaker expressed himself as follows, and to this day I remember how clearly he presented his views and how free he was from excitement.

"We have had no trouble in agreeing on the value of the oil and bone as a basis of settlement and now the only difference relates to this lump of ambergris weighing three hundred pounds. It has been examined and found to be in very fair condition. The highest price it is likely to bring is not three hundred thousand but seventy thousand dollars. I naturally assume some risk as to quality and price. I will settle on the basis of sixty-five thousand dollars, and, if that isn't satisfactory, thee may bring suit or do anything else thee pleases."

The lawyer grumbled a little, muttered

something to his client, backed down entirely, watched with keen eyes the payment of the amount due his companion and accompanied him to the door as if he were a brother.

The Quaker smiled and observed to my father, "I will settle with this young man after the second sailor has been dealt with."

Hardly were the words uttered, when that individual appeared. And it was no other than Ohoo. Negotiations were soon concluded and Ohoo made his mark, took his money and then looked beseechingly at my father, who notified the merchant that he was to see to it that Ohoo's money was safely guarded.

"I approve of thy purpose," the Quaker responded.

Ohoo departed, and almost immediately returned, accompanied by the rest of the crew. After they had been dealt with, the settlement with my father was soon over. The ruling prices as to oil and bone were accepted, and sixty-five thousand dollars for the ambergris was agreed to.

"This is a remarkable case," said the Quaker, as he handed my father a little over

eight hundred dollars. "Thy son has had nothing from the slop chest, and he receives the largest amount I have ever paid a sailor for a single voyage since I have been in the business."

The Quaker took from a drawer a couple of watches, and held them up before his silent and interested audience. He observed, "I have now a very pleasant duty to perform. It is to bestow a gold watch upon our friend from Gay Head, who sighted the largest bowhead captured, and another upon this young man, who was the first to announce the largest sperm whale taken."

The Gay Header showed a row of beautiful teeth as he took the watch; and he caused much laughter when he put it up to his ear, evidently to find out whether it was going.

As I stepped forward, I did not extend my hand, but said, "I don't know as I ought to take the watch, sir. My discovery of the whale wasn't due to sharp eyes, but to luck. The big fellow had sounded at a place far off from us and happened to come up pretty near the ship. I happened to be the first one to see him."



“Nevertheless, the watch belongs to thee.”

Then addressing the crew, he inquired, “Isn’t that so, my friends?”

There was a loud “Yes.”

My gratitude was twofold — to the Quaker merchant for his generosity, and to my companions, most of whom I was never to see again, for their kind approval.

My money was later disposed of to the entire satisfaction of my parents, and now for the closing incident — the watch. My father went to his work, and I went home. The watch came out of my pocket every time I passed any one, and, as I passed a good many people, it came out a good many times. When I reached home, my mother handled it as tenderly as if it had been a baby, and loudly praised my Quaker benefactor. When evening came the visitors exceeded those of the night before. Every one wanted to handle the watch, and I was afraid that they might wear it out before they got through with it. Again I was asked all kinds of questions about the voyage, and particularly about the whale which brought me such good fortune. This was rather a delicate subject. But I was fair

enough to say that the case was not a very meritorious one. That night I slept with the watch under my pillow.

The next morning I walked up Union Street just as the merchants and other business men were going to their offices and places of business. In a jeweler's window was a standard clock, and I noticed more than one passer-by stop and take out his watch and compare the time. This gave me an opportunity to display my timepiece. So I took it out with a great deal of pride, and to my surprise and grief it was fifteen minutes slower than the clock. My head was hot, my eyes were misty and my heart beat violently. I put the watch to my ear, and lo! it had stopped. I walked up the street in a dazed condition, turned into a side street and sat down on a doorstep. I was at a loss what to do, but at last, having pulled myself together, I returned to the jeweler's and, entering, handed him the watch and asked what the matter with it was. He opened it with an important air and examined it carefully and oh! so slowly.

His face was lighted by a faint smile as he

said, "It will take ten days to repair it, and it will cost you fifteen dollars."

An outlay of fifteen dollars on a watch that was not fit for an ashheap! I stammered some excuse and took my departure. All my faculties were now awake, and the course of procedure was plain. I made haste to the Quaker's office. I stood out on the wharf and, looking through the window, saw him, apparently as placid as ever, at work at his desk. I had determined to give him a perfect blast, and, while I was trying to summon the language I proposed to use, some one spoke to me. It was my old friend, the shipkeeper. He saw that I was disturbed and asked the cause. I told him my story and finished by declaring that I was going into the office and upbraid the Quaker for his treatment of me.

"I wouldn't do that," said my companion, "until I had been to another jeweler. There are two things a man can buy and never know what he's buying — one's a horse and the other is a watch. Another jeweler may tell you a different story. Suppose you go to one."

This advice had an excellent effect, and I followed it. I sought an old watchmaker and

silversmith who had a long established record for skill and honesty. There was something fatherly about him, and his face always wore a pleasant expression. His examination was slow and thorough. When completed, a smile spread over his countenance, as he said:

“That’s a fine watch, and there is nothing the matter with it. The trouble is you forgot to wind it last night.”



